SEPTEMBER 1981 NUMBER 43

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# THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

## Origins Report

EXPANDED COMBAT FOR *TRAVELLER*
SPIRIT SWORDS FOR D&D
THE SOLAR KILLER
COMPUTER ADVENTURE GAMES
FGU'S NEW RPG *AFTERMATH*
*DIPLOMACY* VARIANTS
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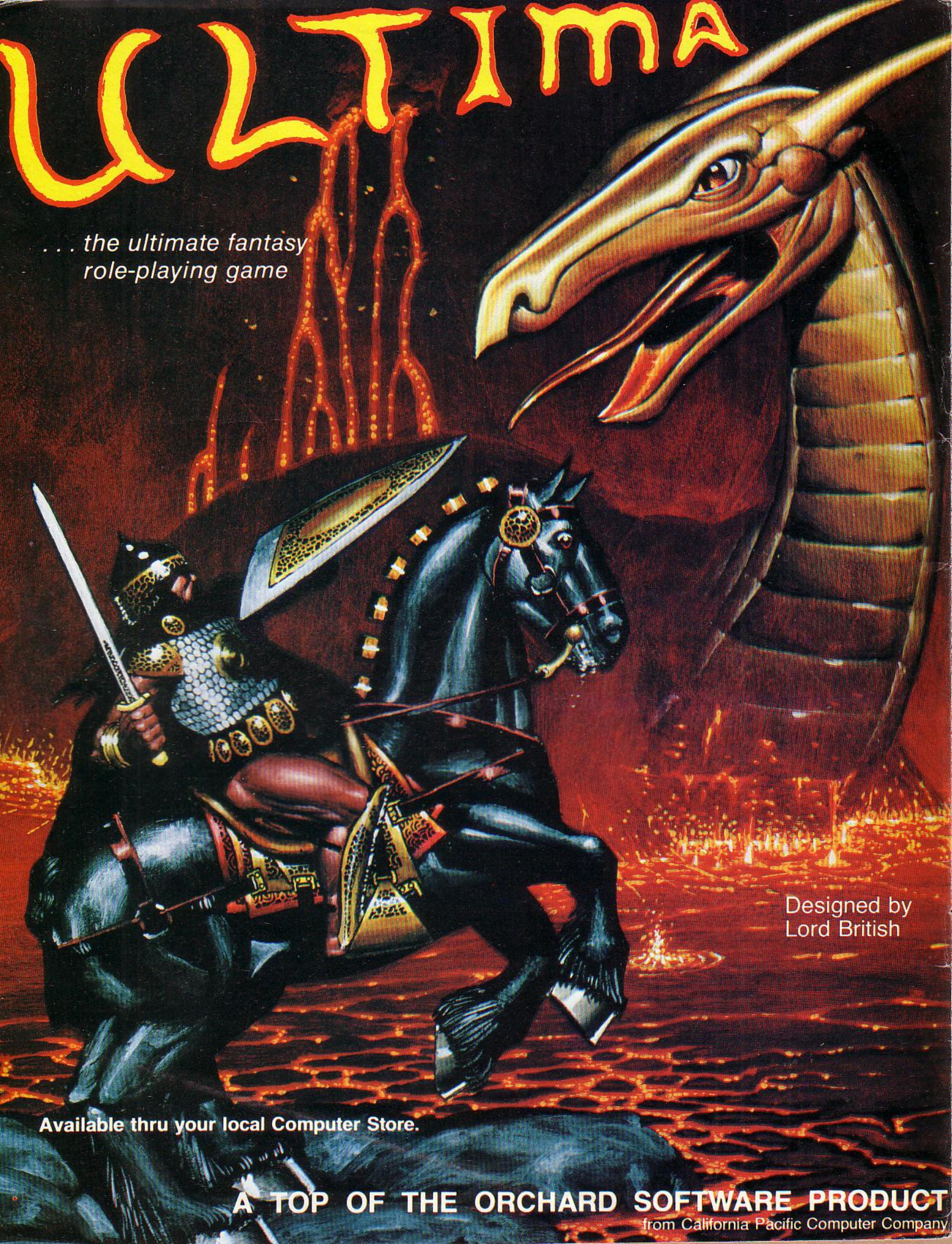
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# THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 43 – SEPTEMBER, 1981

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## In This Issue

No "theme" is this month's issue – just a heterogeneous collection of s-f and fantasy game ideas. We've got another good Timothy Zahn story, along with an article to relate its magic blades to D&D . . . a review of FGU's new *Aftermath* (and a capsule review of the first supplement) . . . some worthwhile complexities for *Traveller* combat, and two more nonhuman races . . . Lew Pulsipher's discourse on *Diplomacy* variants for science fiction and fantasy readers . . . and a comparison of three new computer fantasies!

You'll also notice that we've got some interior color this issue. If reactions are good, it may become a habit.

NOT in this issue is the oddball game I mentioned last month. As warned, it was subject to constraints of time and space – neither of which proved sufficient. We'll try again later.

*–Steve Jackson*

THE SPACE GAMER

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# WHERE WE'RE GOING

For once, the title of this column is 100% literally appropriate. The first announcement is . . . where we're going. We're going to 2700 Metcalfe, Austin, Texas 78741. By the end of August, our move should be substantially complete. (Our phone number and PO box will remain as before; use the new address ONLY for UPS and the like, please.) Due to the move, the magazine is running somewhat late this month. As this column goes in, we're about a week behind.

Our new space has – I hope – all the room we'll be needing for some time. In addition to a slightly expanded office area, it has a room we plan to make a "permanent playtest" headquarters, and a BIG warehouse area. It's also closer to town. A definite improvement.

* * *

Business goes well, I think. I've just gotten the initial sales figures on our latest releases. In one month, we sold approximately 3,600 *Car Wars*, 3,200 *Undead*, 3,000 *Killer*, and 1,700 *Game Design*. That's about half again what I was hoping for. Thanks . . .

* * *

New projects . . . The miniature vehicles for *Car Wars* are still a near-certainty. We're being VERY picky about the original sculpture, and I have to admit that there's a small chance that we'll never get any masters that are beautiful enough to accept. But I think we will. Work is also in progress on two *Car Wars* supplements, each of which expands the original game in a different direction. More on all of this next issue.

Denis Loubet and Paul Jaquays are still working on their respective sets of Cardboard Heroes. We're still looking at a September release date for the four new sets: Denis' three batches of Monsters and Undead, and Paul's first set of 15mm *Traveller* figures.

Two other Cardboard Heroes projects have been waiting in the wings for quite a while: bases and floor plans. The bases would be totally optional: plastic gadgets for those who want a little more weight on their figures. The floor plans would be similar to various "dungeon floors" now on the market. The differences would be (1) they would be full-color, attractive "stone" floors; (2) they would be plastic coated, so you could mark on them and then ERASE the marks, and (3) they would sell for only $5 a set.

* * *

A note on *Killer*: A lot of game stores are sponsoring games for their customers, but the best we've heard so far has come from Warriors, Wizards, and Robots, a California emporium. Their tournament is being GM'd by a private investigator . . . who used to play the game with other "private eyes" as an informal training aid. That ought to be a GOOD game . . . wish I could get in on it!

*–Steve Jackson*

# GAME MASTER

*GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.*

### Car Wars

" . . . I cannot find anywhere what is supposed to happen when a vehicle loses its power plant . . ."

David Dyche
San Diego, CA

*I probably should have cross-referenced this under "effects of damage" – but it's there. Under the power plant rules (bottom of p. 20) you will read "When the power plant is lost, a vehicle can no longer fire lasers or accelerate, but ALL other systems still work." The reasoning behind this is that most vehicle systems would be made as fail-safe as possible; brakes, weapons, etc., would HAVE to function independently if the driver is to feel reasonably secure. The only exceptions are the wheel motors themselves and the laser, which takes up too much power to work without the motor.*

*– Steve Jackson*

### Raid on Iran

(1) At one point you state that the Americans can escape by reaching a street, but that this is more dangerous and costs the U.S. player victory points. Under the victory conditions there is no mention of this. What is the solution?

(2) If Iranian militants or mobs close-attack a helicopter, can that helicopter still attempt to leave – in other words, can helicopters leave with Iranians in the same area?

Overall, I really enjoy the game and find it a very clean system . . .

Bill Creed
Washington, DC

*(The long arm of coincidence strikes! Two days after Bill's letter arrived, we got another letter, with the exact same two questions, from Michael Jeck of Falls Church, VA.)*

*(1) The U.S. player should be docked one point for each person who escapes the embassy on the ground rather than in a helicopter.*

*(2) Yes, a helicopter may leave with Iranians in the same area. When they moved into its area and close-attacked it, they had their chance to disable it. If they were not successful, the helicopter is free to (attempt to) leave.*

*– Steve Jackson*

# Next Issue

***Our October issue will have something special for SF miniatures gamers – a pull-out section on advanced armored combat rules for TRAVELLER;***

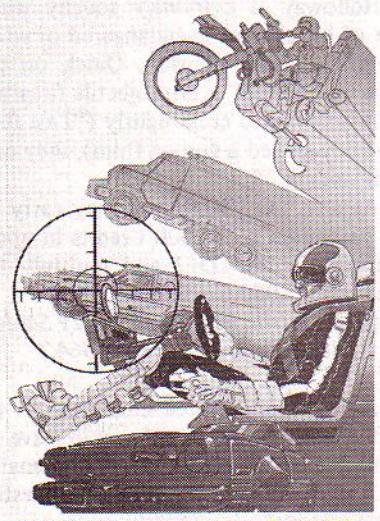
***Also, for D&D enthusiasts, there will be an article on realistic rules for radiation, and "Demography of a Fantasy World," by Lewis Pulsipher;***

***And, for SF role-players, a featured review of SPI's new game system, UNIVERSE.***

# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

*Now . . . three new games from the designer of OGRE, G.E.V., RAID ON IRAN, and THE FANTASY TRIP. More of the best values in gaming . . . at the lowest prices. And a new book that belongs in every serious game-player's library. Read on . . .*

## CAR WARS



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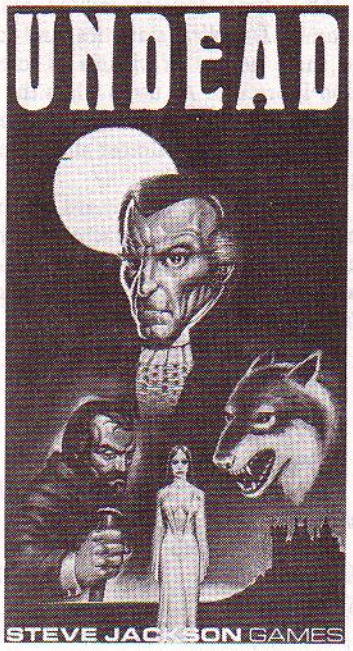
Ever want to blow away the car that cut you off from the freeway . . . drop a few spikes to discourage a tailgater . . . take on a cycle gang with the twin .50-cals under your hood? Now you can.

In CAR WARS, players design freeway combat vehicles, with weapons, armor, and even body style. Then they take them out on the roads of the future – to come home 'aces,' or crash and burn.

Designed by Chad Irby and Steve Jackson. Includes 24-page rulebook, road grids, and FULL-COLOR counters (drawn by Loubet) for cars, cycles, wreckage, etc. Any number can play. $3.00 in stores, or $3.50 by mail from SJ Games.

## UNDEAD




UNDEAD! A role-playing game inspired by Bram Stoker's classic *Dracula.* The vampire Count has come to London to spread death and terror. Moving on a map of the city, the vampire player tries to conceal his coffins and find new victims. His heroic pursuers search for his hiding places and try to alert the city. When the players meet, they battle – until the vampire flees, or one side is destroyed. For two or more players, with or without a referee. Designed by Steve Jackson. Components include *full-color* counters and city map; 24-page rulebook, and combat maps. $3.00 in your hobby shop, or $3.50 by mail direct.

## KILLER

The controversial game that's being played across the country! KILLER is a "live" game. Each player tries to knock off one (or all) of the others, by fair means or foul. Usually foul. Waterguns or dart-guns replace pistols; an exploding balloon becomes a bomb, and so on. This is the first published set of rules for doing your friends in . . . without hurting them. Includes scenario suggestions; dozens of weapon simulators; and hints on keeping your game safe, legal, and not TOO mind-boggling to the rest of the world! KILLER is not for everybody – but if you want to test your reflexes and ingenuity in a way no paper game ever will, then this just may be for you.

Rulebook written by Steve Jackson. $5.00 in stores, or $5.50 by mail direct.

## GAME DESIGN: Theory and Practice

Everything you ever wanted to ask about game design (but didn't know where to start). This authoritative book covers the field from both the theoretical/mathematical viewpoint and the practical angle. The general theory and history of wargaming lead into a detailed nuts-and-bolts discussion of combat, terrain, mapping and movement, component design, professional playtesting techniques, and more. A special chapter covers role-playing game design.

GAME DESIGN is co-authored by two authorities in the field. Nick Schuessler is publisher of the iconoclastic *Journal of WWII Wargaming* and has taught a University of Texas-sponsored course in wargame design. Steve Jackson is designer and/or publisher of several best-selling games. Whether you're interested in "simulation," "playability," or both, this book covers what you need to know. Much of this material originally appeared in *The Space Gamer*, but has been extensively revised and updated, with new material added (including a full bibliography).

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# SF Character Contest Results

Our June contest invited readers to submit *Traveller* statistics and data up to three heroes or villains of science fiction literature. As usual when the contest is *Traveller*-related, there were less than thirty entries, but almost all of them were good.

The winner was Richard Bartucci. He picked three good characters from lesser-known (but still solid) backgrounds, and wrote them up in standard *Citizens of the Imperium* format:

*Captain Bob Schuster*
*99AB87*
*Age: 46*
*8 Terms*
*Credits 65,000*
*Space Mining and Maritime Trouble-shooter.*
*Leader-3, Vacc-1, Navigation-4, Pilot-1, Bribe-2, Admin-3, Jack of All Trades-3, Streetwise-3.*

As long as colonies are planted on worlds with oceans, there will be a need for skilled mariners, and as long as new star systems' asteroid belts are exploited for the raw materials to build them, specialists in zero-G mining and manufacturing will be required.

This hard-bitten saltwater sailorman is unique in having experience in both areas. Employed by a large supranational shipping and mining combine as trouble-shooter and triggerman, his outspokenly critical way with government meddling and his penchant for antagonizing his own corporate hierarchy keep him shifting about on various unpleasant assignments. His skill in handling subordinates and his uncanny knack for finding solutions to the knottiest problems, however, make him too valuable to fire – if only because the competition would snap him up in an instant.

Pragmatic and sometimes abrasive with incompetence, he can be sociable if encountered en route from one system to another, and he can sometimes be found commanding a cargo ship (the nautical kind) on a colony world. Most of the time, however, he will be engaged in the tough task of shaking down a problem-plagued asteroid mining operation.

(From *Captain Empirical* by Sam Nicholson, 1979.)

*As-A-Shade-Of-Purple-Grey*
*355DE9*
*Age: 66*
*6 Terms*
*Credits 83,500*
*Scout-Explorer, Writer, and Inadvertent Magician.*
*Pilot-1, Electronics-5, Navigation-1, Computer-4, Medic-2, Liaison-minus-2*.*

Single-minded in his pursuit of information on new worlds, this well-meaning but sometimes bumbling Scout seems to have an unfortunate propensity for antagonizing the inhabitants of the primitive planets he visits.

Trained as a biochemist and skilled as a writer of popular fiction and science for the non-scientist, he returns from his (usually-solitary) missions only to attend book promotions and major conventions of the Travellers' Aid Society.

*If a company of adventurers including Purple should encounter a group of low-tech sophonts, it is likely that his "negative skill" in Liaison will, in spite of his best intentions, almost invariably cause him to insult and infuriate the natives; it is left to the referee's discretion to determine the results of this unfortunate characteristic.

(From *The Flying Sorcerors* by David Gerrold & Larry Niven, 1971.)

*Jack Holloway*
*988A88*
*Age: ? (Old, but going strong . . . )*
*Gemstone Miner*
*Air/Raft-3, Liaison-3, Jack of All Trades-4, Survival-3, Gun Combat (Rifle)-5, Gun Combat (Pistol)-5.*

Self-sufficient and experienced in opening up dozens of new colony worlds, this tough character is currently working a solo mining claim deep in the wilderlands of a planet in the Spinward Marches.

Adept at contact with extraterrestrials, he has a family of small (ca. 30cm. tall) autochthons living with him at his base camp. These little furry bipeds are tool-using forest-dwellers, intelligent but *very* low-tech (paleolithic-equivalent), amiable and outgoing. While timid in their natural habitat, "Pappy Jack's" friends are familiar with humans, sometimes to the point of getting into things too delicate or too dangerous to permit their tinkering. The average characteristics of an adult are 187411 (on human scale). Roll 1D+3 for number.

If threatened, the bipeds will fight as a co-ordinated team using metal weapons made for them by their Terrohuman friend, consisting of a steel shaft with a knobkerrie on one end and a blade at the other. The latter can be used for stabbing or slashing.

Holloway is *extremely* touchy when one of his charges is endangered or when he is threatened himself. Quick on the draw and deadly with projectile firearms, he is not one to cross lightly ("Last time anybody pulled a gun on (him), they called it suicide.").

At any time, Holloway may carry on his person up to 80,000 Credits in uncut gemstones (roll 1D+2 and multiply the result by 10,000 Credits).

(From *Little Fuzzy* and *Fuzzy Sapiens* by H. Beam Piper, 1962 and 1964.)

Any of these three characters is the sort that a *Traveller* ref would have no trouble working into a standard scenario, and any of them would be interesting game material.

Second place went to Gary E. Reilly, for his description of the two lead characters from *Hammer's Slammers*. Created by author David Drake, the Slammers are a crack armored force whose services are for sale to the highest bidder. As such, they could appear in a campaign – and they might well be involved in the Fifth Frontier War now in progress. If Gary had written up some stats on their heavy equipment, he would have come in first– but refs can supply that for themselves with a little work.

*Colonel Alois Hammer*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Strength* | *B* | *Intelligence* | *B* |
| *Dexterity* | *C* | *Education* | *9* |
| *Endurance* | *E* | *Social Standing* | *D* |

*Traveller Rank 5*
*Skills: Pistol-3, Tactics-3, Leader-4, Administration-2, Streetwise-2, Heavy Weapons-2, Survival-3.*

Colonel Hammer is widely known as the commander of the highly successful mechanized mercenary force commonly known as Hammer's Slammers. On and off the battlefield, his tactical and strategic expertise has earned him a reputation as one of the best mercenary leaders in this section of the Imperium. Once he has accepted a contract, Hammer uses whatever means necessary to fulfill it, even though some of his tactics have been judged excessive by his critics. A man of great self-determination, Hammer is strongly dedicated to those who serve under him. In turn, loyalty by his troops

goes beyond all expectations (as seen by his high Social Standing).

Alois Hammer possesses a trim, hourglass figure that has been toughened by his military experience. Except when absolutely required by protocol, his dress consists of simple, but functional battlefield dress. Hammer's personal weapon is the 1cm powerpistol (treat as small version of the PGMP-14, 8D damage).

*Joachim Steuben*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Strength* | *A* | *Intelligence* | *A* |
| *Dexterity* | *E* | *Education* | *8* |
| *Endurance* | *C* | *Social Standing* | *5* |

*Skills: Pistol-6, Survival-4, Streetwise-3.*

Joachim Steuben is Alois Hammer's right-hand man and chief confidant. At first, his immaculate dress and boyish-slim figure may mislead people. Behind his nearly feminine features, Steuben maintains a fierce and fatal personality. His intense loyalty to Hammer verges on fanaticism. Anyone offering even the slightest perceived insult or danger to Hammer will become the target of Steuben's hatred.

Steuben's combination of speed (Dexterity E) and gun accuracy (Pistol-6) make him a fatal enemy. His preferred weapon is a superbly crafted 1cm powerpistol. He is said to obtain pin-point accuracy at extreme ranges (in excess of one kilometer) with this gun. Imperial psyche-profiles classify Steuben as extremely dangerous and to be handled with caution at all times.

Colonel Alois Hammer and his Slammers provide an excellent band of mercenaries for inclusion in any *Traveller* campaign. He may be willing to contract the Slammer's services to a player-character or may be actively seeking fresh recruits for his force. Unfortunate, indeed, is any player character who would come in direct conflict with the Slammers or their commander.

An honorable mention goes to Robert Weissinger for his tongue-in-cheek entry, based on Douglas Adams' *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This material is probably too strange for many referees, and would require a good deal of interpolation before it could be used . . . but if you like Monty Python D&D adventures, you'll LOVE a "Hitchhiker" game of *Traveller.*

*Zaphod Beebelbrox*
*UPP 897442*
*Age: 200 years – physical: 30 years*
*Skills: Con-3*, Forgery-2, Streetwise-2, Hypo-Gun-2, Gambling-2, Hitchhiker-1, Towel-1*, Pilot-½.*

Beeblebrox, the ex-president of the Galaxy, is being searched for by the Galaxy's Police for stealing the *Heart of Gold*, the Infinite Improbability Drive prototype ship. (More data later.) Therefore, any contact with another ship will cause Zaphod to turn tail and run on a roll of 5+. DM +3 if Imperial Navy Ship, -1 for every level of Streetwise and Hitchhiker any one character aboard has. His most outstanding features are his two heads and three arms. In his third hand, which he always keeps in his pocket, he carries a Hypo-Gun (see Paranoia Press' *Merchants and Merchandise*). He has a very large stash of anagathics, explaining his long lifespan. He also carries several doses of Combat Drug.

*Ford Prefect*
*UPP 777863*
*Age: 32*
*Skills: Hitchhiker-3*, Towel-3*, Streetwise-2, Pilot-½.*

Ford Prefect is a researcher for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, who, along with his friend Arthur Dent, manages to escape from the Earth moments before it is demolished to make way for a Hyperspace bypass. In his possession is the Guidebook, an electronic device which gives information (sometimes wildly inaccurate) about the galaxy; a Sub-Ether Sens-o-Matic, a device used to signal ships to try and hitch a ride; and, most importantly, a towel.

*Arthur Dent*
*UPP 687552*
*Age: 30 years*
*Skills: Towel-1.*

Arthur is only a highly confused person trying to make some sense of a very confusing galaxy. He knows only the barest minimum knowledge needed to survive in the universe, and therefore he is constantly referring to the *Hitchhiker's Guide.*

**New Skills:*

*Con:* Basically, the ability to pull a fast one, i.e., selling the Brooklyn Bridge, selling used spaceships, etc. To see if a con scheme works, the referee rolls 2D vs. the mark's Intelligence – the Con level of the conner. If the roll is equal to or higher than this number, the con has worked, but on a 12, the con was discovered.

*Hitchhiker:* Basic knowledge in how to hitch a ride aboard spaceships. The base roll is determined by the referee for a chance of getting aboard, and is modified thusly: DM+1 for each level of Hitchhiker, +2 if ride is intersystem, -5 if no Hitchhiking ability, -1 for every additional person taken. If the modified roll on 2D is the base or higher, you get on.

*Towel:* Knowledge of the proper utilization of that item which is most useful to a hitchhiker – a towel. In combat, treat as a club for range and armor modifiers. A towel does 1D+1 damage, and each time the target is hit, he must make a saving throw (3D vs. Endurance). Failing causes unconsciousness for 2-12 (2D) minutes. For more uses of a towel, check *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.*

*Gadgets, Ships, and Robots*

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*
*Cost: Cr 50*

This is a very important item for galactic hitchhikers, because it helps them to make sense of a confusing universe. Its best selling points are its low cost, and the words "Don't Panic" imprinted on the cover. It is with this that the referee can give information to the player, though it won't always be right.

*Infinite Improbability Ship* ***Heart of Gold***

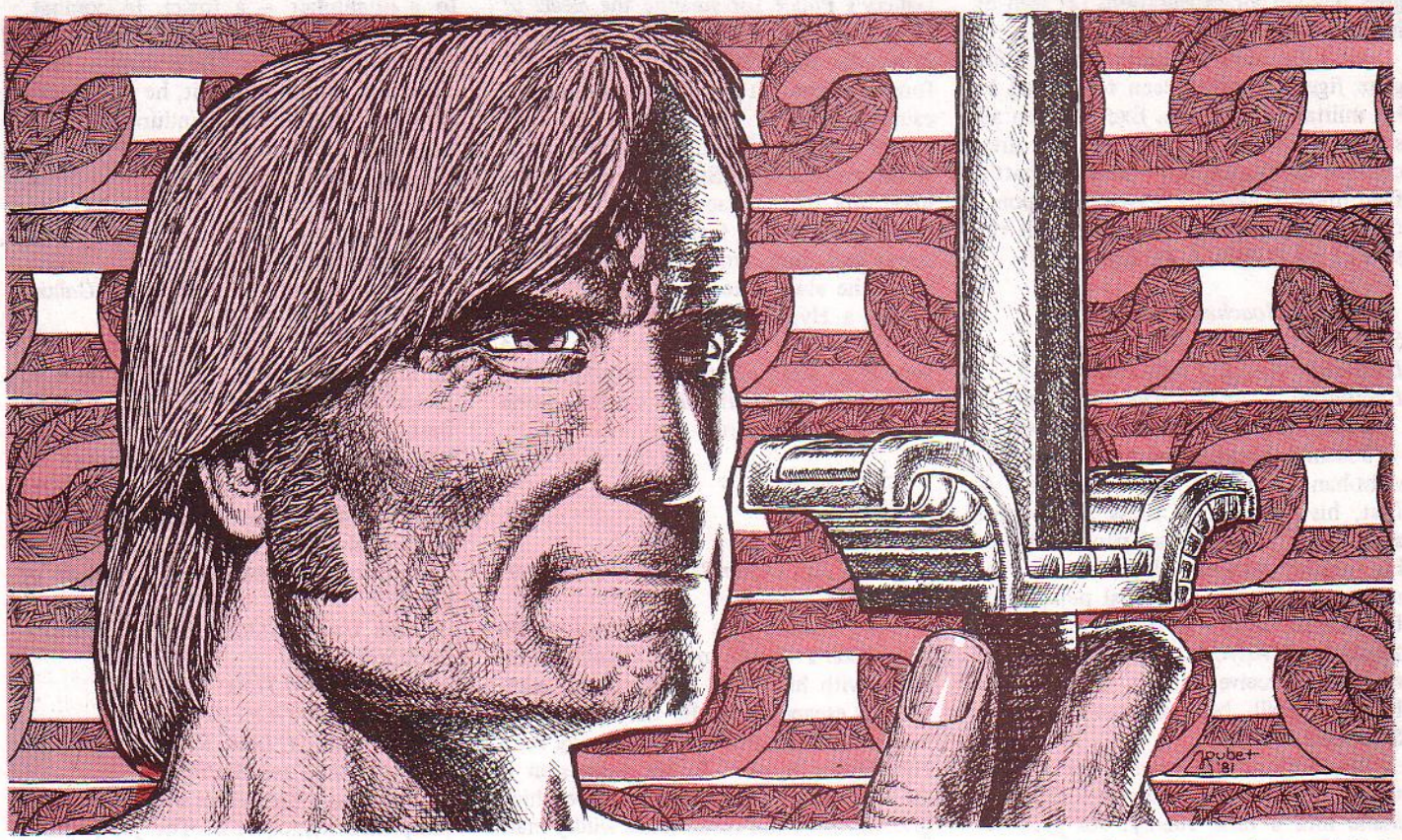
***High Guard*** *Statistics: YZ-K2∞ZZFI-000050-00000-0*
*Mass: 10,000 Tons*
*Cost: 1,000 GCr*
*Passengers: 4; Low: 0; Cargo: 200 Tons*
*Fuel: 300 Tons; Agility: Z*

Yes, that's right. This ship has infinite-jump and maneuver-Z. The jump drive, in this case, is the Infinite Improbability Drive, which basically allows a ship to jump between the stars almost instantaneously, but there is always the chance of mis-jumps (roll 11+, no DMs for each jump). The computer is designed to basically run the ship by itself. It has a happy, cheerful personality, and answers to the name of "Eddie." This ship is Tech Level 18.

*Marvin, the Paranoid Android*
*Cost: 5 MCr*
*Type IV chassis and leg propulsion units*
*Basic Sensor Package, Voder/Vocoder unit*
*Large robotic brain*
*Programming: Pilot-2, Navigator-2, Manic-Depressive / Paranoid personality, and a telepathic package allowing for Probe ability.*

This should be enough for most referees to start with. Share and enjoy!

The May contest invited readers to design Combine light units for *Ogre/G.E.V.* Reluctantly, we're going to have to invoke our "no winners" clause . . . the response was relatively small, and none of the designs we received seemed both workable *and* futuristic. We got some pretty good "Buck Rogers" ideas, and several reworked M-60s – but that wasn't really what we were after. So it goes.



# Sword's Man

## By Timothy Zahn

If I had to do it over again, I think I would have followed the advice my first warmaster gave me many years ago: never, *never,* buy anything from a wandering wizard.

Don't get me wrong, now – except for a few rotten finfruit, wandering wizards are pretty much honest, helpful sorts who are perfectly harmless unless you spit in their eyes or forget to bow the requisite number of times or something. Melc-sa-fae was one of these upstanding types. And the sword itself *is* exactly as described: one black-hilted falchion, djinn-possessed, length and weight somewhat variable. A good bargain . . . probably. . . .

I suppose I'd better start at the beginning. It was in early summer, as I was coming back from the sack of Trel Castle with the fifteen thousand gold pieces that was my fair share of the loot. (Well, maybe a *little* more than my share; but *I* was the one who had had to clear out that dungeon, after all.) Fifteen thousand gold pieces weigh a *lot.* I'd ruined one horse already and was fast losing a second when I came upon Melc-sa-fae the wizard.

He was sitting under a tree singing quietly to himself – or so I thought until I saw the griffin sitting enchanted in the branches over his head. At first I figured the wizard was using a spell to keep the beast at bay – it's sure what *I* would have been doing – but as I came closer I saw it shift its wings slightly and realized Melc-sa-fae was simply using the griffin as a mobile sunshade.

I was just starting to pass him by, keeping a wary eye on the griffin, when he opened his eyes. "Greetings to thee, Warrior," he said. "Come and tell me where thou art bound."

Knowing better than to refuse, and glad of a rest anyway, I went over. "I am called Conakar of Masaar, noble Wizard," I said, bowing five times – the number of silver stars spangled on his belt. He moved his arm slightly, uncovering the sixth star; hastily, I bowed again. "I seek no particular land, only adventure."

"And wealth, too," he said, eying my horse's burden. "I am Melc-sa-fae, Wizard Sixth Rank. Dost thou intend to travel far with thy plunder?"

I was pulling the heavy bags off the horse and letting them thump to the ground. "I'd hoped to at least get it to Borsil, where I could buy gems or something else a little easier to carry."

"There are many thieves between here and Borsil," the wizard rumbled. "Against them even a powerful adventurer might have great difficulty."

I'd already worried some about that without coming up with any good answers. "I don't suppose you'd be willing to accompany me for a proper fee."

He shook his head. "My path lies in a different direction. But perchance I may aid thee in another way."

Reaching into the pack that lay at his side, he produced an ordinary-looking black-hilted falchion – ordinary-looking, that is, until he drew it from its scabbard and I saw the distinctive mirror-finished blade. " 'Tis a djinn sword," he identified it unnecessarily, handing it to me.

I'd never actually held a djinn sword before, and I felt both exhilarated and a little scared as I swung it back and forth a few times. It was amazingly light, and didn't seem like it would pack much punch. I said so and Melc-sa-fae smiled. "Try it on yon limb," he suggested, pointing to a branch as thick as my thigh.

I took a swing, and damn near severed the branch completely. Just before the impact, the sword suddenly got a whole lot heavier, and the extra weight drove it two-thirds through the branch with ease.

"I'm impressed," I said. The sword came out of the branch easily, too.

"The djinn can also change the length and breadth somewhat," Melc-sa-fae said, which explained why it had been so easy to withdraw. " 'Twould be extraordinary protection for thee."

I rubbed my chin. I was sick of always being on the receiving end of enchanted weaponry, and djinn swords were supposed to be effective against a wide range of magical spells, as well. "How much do you want for it?" I asked.

" 'Tis a most valuable instrument," he said thoughtfully, probably trying to estimate how much I had in my bags. "But for a truly noble adventurer I would ask a mere seventeen thousand gold pieces."

I slid the sword back in its sheath, drew it experimentally, and made a face. "Thirteen," I offered.

We eventually settled on fourteen thousand seven hundred, plus the horse and my old sword. Even at that it was a hell of a deal, and as I walked away leaving him under his griffin I wondered why he'd been so eager to deal. Probably just liked my face, I decided.

"So, you're going to take me on adventures, huh?" the sword said in a tinny voice as we topped the first hill.

Not being used to my equipment talking to me, I jumped. "Uh, yes," I told it, feeling a little strange.

"Great," it said. "Old Melc-sa-fae's too sedate for my tastes. Oh, by the way, my name's Whehalken – he forgot to introduce us. Where are we going first?"

"Oh, I don't know. I seek no particular land –"

"Yeah, I heard that part already. Silly way to run a business, if you ask me."

I bristled. "I didn't actu–"

"Why don't you go after particular targets?" Whehalken went on as if I hadn't spoken. "The haunted cave at Toulerec, say, or the Westfalren treasure, or even the Jewels of Horrere."

"Forget Horrere." I'd heard stories about the Jewels, and about what was guarding them, and I wanted no part of that. But the Westfalren thing sounded interesting. "What's this Westfalren treasure?"

"It's supposed to be a large pile of gold and jewels bound up with a fire djinn and guarded by a few basilisks and may be a weretiger or two."

"Great," I growled. "That's all, huh? Just how big an expedition are you planning, anyway?"

"Just you and me." He sounded surprised. "I thought you were a big, powerful warrior. You afraid of a few basilisks?"

"Let's say I'm cautious. I want to live long enough to enjoy any treasure I find – it's a personality quirk."

Whehalken snorted. I'd never heard a sword snort before, but he managed it. "Oh, for – Maybe we ought to attack a greengrocer, then. Safer."

"All right, knock it off!" I snapped. "Until someone dies and you're appointed king, just keep your mou– just keep quiet."

"Well, I don't know why you bought me if you're not going to listen to my advice," he muttered.

He had a point. Djinn swords were supposed to be basically truthful – except wraithers, which always have red blades – and they *did* seem to have private ways of learning things. I thought about it for two more hills before speaking again. "So you think we can take Westfalren, eh?"

Silence. "Whehalken, are you there?" I asked tentatively, tapping the hilt with my right fingernail.

"You told me to keep quiet," he said petulantly. "Make up your mind."

"*Look* –" I took a deep breath and swallowed my irritation. "All right, yes, I want your advice. Really."

"Yeah, I think we can take it," he said briskly, changing moods with the speed of a unicorn's parry. I began to wonder if he'd been faking the grumpiness. "It's about four days' journey away, west and a little north of here. We take the north branch when this road splits a few miles ahead."

"Well . . . I suppose we can at least go and take a look around."

"Sure," he agreed. "You can always back out then if you want."

I didn't say anything. But I was beginning to wonder if Whehalken had been such a good bargain after all.

* * *

Nightfall found us about half a mile from one of the ugliest manor houses I'd ever seen.

"Who owns this place?" I asked Whehalken as we trudged toward it through the light undergrowth which was all that remained of our branch of the road.

"Last I knew the Kagan Pentalas owned all this territory. Fancies himself a warrior and a wizard, but isn't much good as either. You going to ask for lodging?"

"I sure don't want to stay out *here* all night." I'd been keeping an eye on the woods that bordered our path, and had caught glimpses of large animals that I had no desire to meet by moonlight, djinn sword or no. "Why; don't you trust him?"

"Who, me? We spirits aren't in the trusting business, Conakar. When we get trusting we get locked into swords and treasures and stuff." He sounded bitter.

"Oh." I couldn't think of anything else to say.

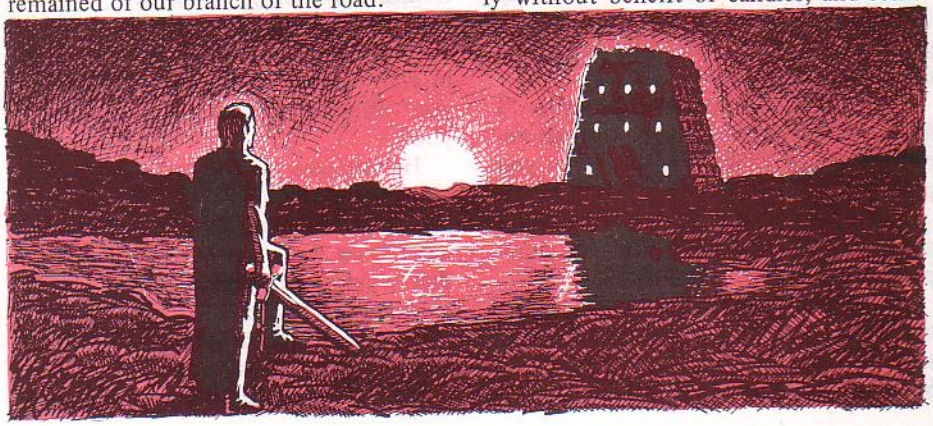
We reached the manor house – a four-story bastard-castle sort of monstrosity – before it got really dark. I didn't much care for the doorwarder's looks, but he welcomed me courteously enough and conducted me inside to meet the Kagan Pentalas. Fortunately, Whehalken didn't say anything, and except for a sort of strangled choke halfway down the hall, I didn't hear a peep out of him.

Pentalas had done his formal chamber as a miniature of the throne room at Bagdathida Major, and I had to admit he looked rather impressive seated there on his fan-shaped chair, a stylized roc head peering over each shoulder.

"So, Conakar, what brings you to the modest demesne of Wesgard?" he asked in a rumbling voice after we'd exchanged names and he'd offered me a bed for the night.

"I seek adventure, noble Kagan," I told him. "Adventure, and perhaps a bit of wealth."

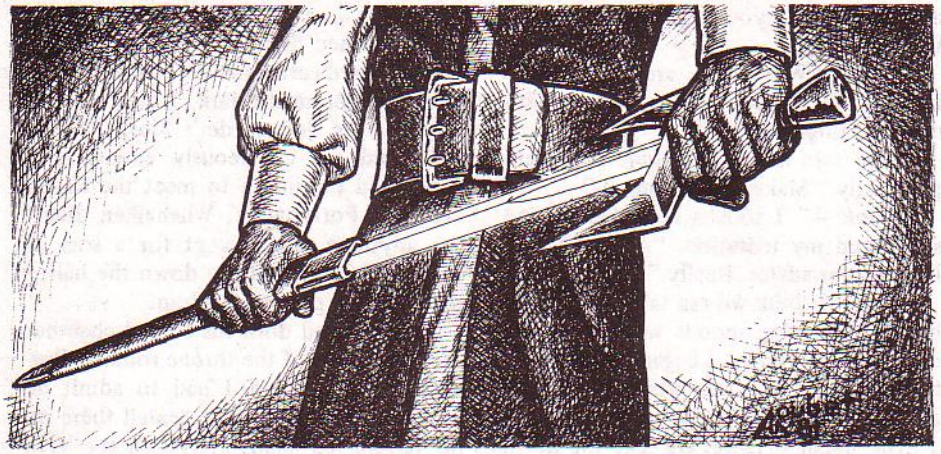
His eyes narrowed fractionally, and I instantly regretted saying anything about wealth. A second-rate wizard, Whehalken had called him; but the more I looked around the throne room the less I believed that. The carved wooden ceiling beams were far too heavy to be held up by their narrow wall connections alone, the five gold-and-crystal chandeliers glowed brightly without benefit of candles, and some



of the statues lining the walls were following me with their eyes. The whole place stank of enchantment. And if that wasn't enough, the ten or eleven retainers who were lined up around the walls looked slightly trollish and extremely mean. The last thing I wanted Pentalas to think was that I was going treasure-hunting on his property. "Actually, I'm on my way to win the Westfalren treasure," I added hastily.

"I see." He didn't seem particularly relieved. "You are a brave man indeed to venture such a quest alone. Or do you have powers of which I am unaware?"

"Tell him your great-uncle buried the treasure, so you've got a legitimate



claim," Whehalken murmured unexpectedly, just loud enought for me to hear.

"I have the power of rightful claim," I told Pentalas loftily. "My great-uncle originally owned the hoard."

"Ah? But possession is usually more telling than rightful claims," the Kagan pointed out.

Whehalken whispered something else. "I am willing to dispute that," I said, again following the sword's suggestions. "Justice will overtake all despoilers in the end."

There was a slight murmur from the men along the walls – and not one of admiration. Casually glancing around, I noticed with some uneasiness that four of the retainers had drifted closer to the double doors that were the room's only visible exit. I wondered what the hell was going on – were they siding with the djinn and basilisks at Westfalren?

Pentalas broke into my thoughts. "I sense another power about you; an enchantment or other sorcery. Have you perchance a magic blade?"

"Of a sort," I said. If they *liked* djinns and basilisks . . . "My blade is djinn-possessed."

It was like someone had cast a spell . . . or maybe someone did. Suddenly the tension in the room was thick enough to brace battlements with. I'd been right about the trollish looks, after all – and trolls do *not* like djinns. I was beginning to sweat heavily, and it was all I could do to keep my hands peacefully at my sides.

Pentalas leaned forward, a glint in his eye. "Interesting," he murmured. "Perhaps you would allow me to see it."

I reached slowly to my belt with my left hand, thinking furiously. I didn't dare draw Whehalken – an action like that could be misinterpreted even under the best of conditions, which these weren't. But with a dozen unfriendlies around me, I didn't want to hand over my only sword, either. "Perhaps in the morning I can give you a full demonstration of his abilities," I suggested lamely.

"That would best be done outside, in the daylight."

Slowly he leaned back again, the glint still in his eyes. "Very well," he rumbled. "But you must be tired. Harbrec will show you to your room."

I bowed low, glad to be leaving. "Thank you, O Kagan Pentalas –"

And without missing a beat Whehalken chimed in. " – usurper of the throne of Wesgard," he added, duplicating my voice exactly.

Pentalas leaped to his feet with a roar, snatching his sword from its sheath. As if that was the signal they'd been waiting for, the others drew their own weapons and charged.

"Wait a second!" I yelled over the trollish battle cries. "I didn't – Whehalken, why the *hell* –"

"Would you rather have been murdered in your sleep?" he snapped. "*Draw,* will you? Pentalas is practically on top of you."

He was, too, bearing down on me with a fire-tinged blade that had to be a shaped elemental. Even as I yanked Whehalken out I knew there was nothing I could say that would stop the Kagan's attack. He must really *be* a usurper to be this mad, I realized, and I wondered what the hell Whehalken was trying to do.

Pentalas was almost in range, his sword already starting its downward sweep when I finally moved, feinting left and then leaping right. Pentalas didn't fall for it; his sweep shifted angle to aim directly toward my skull. I whipped Whehalken up to block – and saw, too late, the bodkin in Pentalas's left hand arcing for my side. I braced myself to twist aside – and just then our swords met.

There was a flash of fire and a screech that froze my blood and nearly drowned Pentalas' bellow. He jerked back, looking dazed, half of a dull gray sword clutched in his hand. With some small hope of retrieving the situation, I gave him the flat of my blade instead of chopping his head off. Spinning around to face the charging part-trolls, I threw my arms straight up over my head. "Stop!" I shouted . . . and as my arms reached full extension Whehalken flew out of my hand.

I'm a swordsman; I've been handling blades since my fifth birthday, and I do *not* lose hold of them in mid-battle. Even as I dived for the throne where I had seen Pentalas' bodkin go skittering I knew what had happened; Whehalken had pulled his size-changing trick with the hilt. Whehalken had deserted me, deliberately.

I grabbed the bodkin in my left hand – my own dagger was now in my right – and spun around, pressing my back to the throne. At least it would be quick, I told myself bitterly. The howling part-trolls, the scent of blood already beclouding their minds, would reach me in seconds; and with my dying breath I would curse Whehalken and his treachery. For all the good that would do.

And then, without warning, there was a sudden thunderous clatter and an ear-splitting scream, and the whole ceiling collapsed above us.

I woke up, probably no more than a few minutes later, with a throbbing headache. Levering myself in stages to a sitting position, I peered around me at the darkened room – darkened because the chandeliers had gone out and the only light came from a handful of high windows.

The room was a mess. Beams and broken crystal lay everywhere. Underneath them, at various places, lay unmoving forms. I stayed where I was until I could account for Pentalas and all his troops, and then got carefully to my feet. "You okay, Conakar?" Whehalken's voice came from across the floor. "Come over here and get me, will you? I'm stuck into one of the beams."

"*Sure* I will," I growled as sarcastically as I could. "Great idea. It'll give you another chance to kill me."

"Don't be ridiculous. I saved your life

– or could you have handled all those fighters yourself?"

That was a good point. But – "No, but it was your fault they attacked me in the first place. You and that stupid insult – in *my* voice, yet."

"Well, he *did* usurp the demesne, or so I've heard –"

"Who *cares*? You didn't have to goad them like that!"

"I did if you want the Westfalren treasure. It's downstairs."

"And that stuff – what? The treasure? How do you know?"

"Pentalas left the fire djinn in the hoard when he brought it back, probably pretty recently. I sensed it when we came in."

"So that stuff about being the rightful heir was just to make them nervous, huh?" I was still mad, but the logic of the scheme was getting a lot clearer. "But why couldn't you have waited until I'd at least had a night's sleep?"

"Because they were all together in this room," Whehalken explained patiently. "They might not have been all here in the morning."

"So? Oh – the ceiling." I craned my head upwards and winced. "How'd you do it?"

"Simple. Like I said, Pentalas is – was – a rotten wizard. Most of his impressive magic was done by captured spirits. I just released the ones holding up the ceiling and lighting the chandeliers and down it all came. I figured you'd be safe enough there by the throne or I'd have yelled a warning."

"Thanks. You were almost right."

"Sorry. Well, come on – all we have to do is go downstairs and release the fire djinn and the treasure's yours."

Clutching the back of my head, I stumbled through the wreckage toward Whehalken's voice. It couldn't be this easy, I told myself.

But it was.

* * *

With the aid of a stunted cartage-dragon we found chained up in the stable, we got the treasure – minus flame djinn – to Borsil, where I sold the whole lot for a horse, extra armor and supplies, and some very fine gems. I'd planned to go next to Ezaleh, but Whehalken has heard rumors of a treasure buried at the foot of a permanent waterspout somewhere south of Jal. We argued about it some, but in the end I gave in. After all, Whehalken *does* seem to know what he's doing.

Which bothers me just a bit . . .

Sure, Whehalken's explanation of the Pentalas affair fits the facts well enough; and he *did* get me a lot of treasure with ridiculously little effort. But I can't throw the feeling that he wasn't really doing any of it for *me*, that saving my neck may have been merely a way of accomplishing his real goal. You see, I keep remembering his bitterness when talking about trapped spirits like himself, and the fact that in getting me the Westfalren treasure he managed to liberate eight of them, counting the elemental in Pentalas's sword. That's a *lot* of spirits for a single night's work . . . especially since he didn't *have* to free the chandelier spirits to get me out of that jam.

But even if I'm right, I suppose I really don't have any reason to complain. As long as Whehalken protects me and helps me get rich, it's none of my business what sort of private quest he wants to pursue. But it's sort of embarrassing to find myself acting as a glorified cartage-dragon for a sword. I hope I can keep anyone else from finding out – I have a reputation to consider.

Anyway, I guess I know now why Melc-sa-fae was so eager to sell me the sword. And I think that the next time I meet a wizard on the road I'll just keep walking.

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# Bound Spirit Blades in D&D

A bound spirit sword is created in the manner you would expect – by conjuring a spirit and binding it into a blade. The creator must be able to conjure or summon the creature involved, and must perform the following spells: Enchant an Item, Trap the Soul, Limited Wish, and Permanency. Bound spirits are powerful, but always somewhat contrary.

A bound spirit sword has the same alignment as the spirit. It has an intelligence equal to the spirit's, and an ego equal to its wisdom (roll 3d6 unless otherwise specified). If it speaks, it can use any language normal for that creature.

In effect, a bound spirit is an NPC controlled by the DM. It may not actively seek its own release, but may complain as much as it likes, or try to dominate its owner. If a spirit blade is broken, the spirit is released.

### Demon & Devil Blades

These are almost as dangerous as cursed blades. They do not convey all the powers of the spirit involved, since it must be weakened to be bound. Demon blades are dull black, and warm to touch. Devil blades are shiny black and icy cold. Both kinds communicate telepathically.

A blade from a Type I-III demon or lesser devil is +1. A blade from a Type IV-VI demon or greater devil is +2. There are rumors of blades made by binding demon lords and arch devils, but they are probably just rumors.

Either kind of blade will allow the owner to Detect Good and use Infravision. Also, it will convey a degree of magic resistance equal to the spirit's. In addition, demon blades have the power to create darkness in a radius of 15 feet. (The bearer can see through the darkness.) Devil blades can create fear in any being struck (save as against wands).

Demon and devil swords are sometimes given to evil characters as part of a pact, or reward for services rendered. They lie freely, and will always try to dominate their wielders.

### Djinn Blades

Djinn are perhaps the most agreeable of bound spirits. Djinn blades appear highly polished, gleaming like mirrors. They can speak any language.

Djinn blades are +2. They can create matter, whirlwinds, and illusions like a djinn. They enable their owners to become invisible, but not to fight in that form.

Djinn never lie. They will never intentionally betray a master of the same alignment, though they may trick him into serving their own interests. Also, their judgment is not perfect; they can get their masters in trouble accidentally.

### Efreet Blades

Efreet blades are froward and sometimes dangerous. They shine like djinn blades, but with a reddish cast, and are warm to touch. In battle, they appear as flaming swords. They can speak any language.

Efreet blades are +2; against cold-using creatures and undead, they are +4. Damage taken from an efreet blade counts as fire damage for purposes of regeneration. They can detect magic, create illusions, and create a wall of fire as can an efreet. They enable their users to become invisible, but not to fight in that form.

Efreets cannot tell a literal lie, though they often distort the truth. They treat owners of any alignment equally insolently.

### Elemental Blades

An elemental must be weakened to be bound at all, so these blades are not as powerful as the others. However, they are dumb, and relatively easy to control. Elemental blades are +1. They do not communicate.

*Fire blades* are red-grey and hot to touch. They are +3 versus cold-using creatures and undead. Damage taken from a fire blade counts as fire damage for purposes of regeneration.

*Water blades* are blue-grey. They enable their users to breathe water and move freely through water.

*Earth blades* are granite-grey. They can be used to tunnel through earth at 5 feet a minute, or through rock at 1 foot a minute.

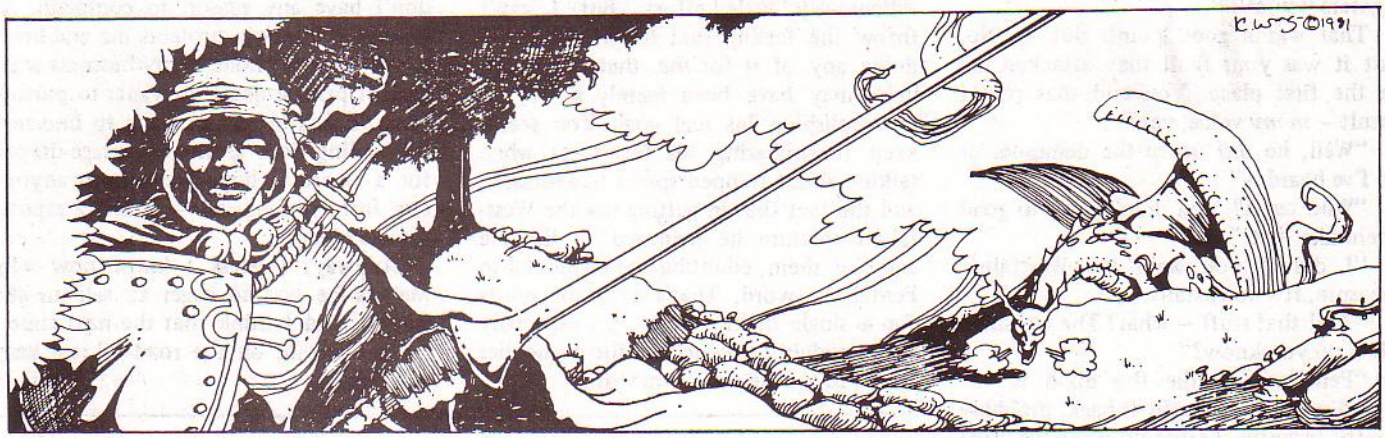
*Air blades* are silvery grey. They enable the owner to fly at 18" a turn.

### Invisible Stalker Blades

When seen, these appear vague and translucent. They can speak, mostly to curse and give insult.

An invisible stalker blade is +2. It enables the user to become invisible and to attack in that form, also to Detect Invisible and to track as a 5th level ranger.

Invisible stalkers are generally obedient but obnoxious. They make no secret of their displeasure with their owners and with things in general.



# FEATURED REVIEW:

# SwordThrust

## by Forrest Johnson

Recipe for an excellent computer game: Start with an adventure/dialog program – you Open Box, Get Sword, Attack Monster, and so on. Add some features of an FRP game. You have a "character" with "characteristics." He can get tired and rest, or be wounded and then healed. The *piece de resistance* – your character is reusable. He can be transferred from adventure to adventure, read directly from one disk to another, complete with equipment, gold and experience.

This is SWORDTHRUST, the creation of Donald Brown. His name is familiar to those who have played *Eamon*. But SWORDTHRUST is a commercial effort, and is more complete than the earlier game.

### The System

Much of SWORDTHRUST will seem familiar to FRP gamers. When you boot the master disk to create your first character, you see three characteristics –"hardiness" (read ST), "agility" (read DX) and "charisma" (read charisma). These will range from 1 to 30. Charisma is the most important of the three. In this game, the greatest hero is he who makes his enemy his friend.

Your character starts with 200 g.p. and can buy any of five kinds of weapons, three kinds of armor, and two kinds of shields. Ten magic spells are available; most are too expensive for beginning characters. One can also visit a tavern and pick up rumors, can buy some training, or leave his money at the bank.

Each weapon has a base chance to hit, and deals a variable amount of damage (a sword does 1d8, a mace 1d4). Shields and armor absorb damage, but reduce your chance to hit. Neither shield nor armor can absorb damage indefinitely, but it's hard to tell how much punishment one will take.

Each weapon, and spell, counts as a skill to be learned separately. There are also skills for parrying, using a weapon left-handed and wearing armor without DX penalty. Successful use of a skill may improve your level of ability.

Combat is straightforward. Fight or flee is your main option. However, you can also throw a spell, pick up a dropped weapon, or simply rest a turn.

### Charisma

I learned the hard way that good charisma is vital for SWORDTHRUST characters. No matter how mighty a swordsman, an adventurer won't get far without friends.

Monsters are either (1) hostile and attack you, (2) neutral and ignore you, or (3) friendly and follow you around, attacking hostile monsters. A character with high enough charisma can recruit a small army at no expense.

Of course, this is factored into the adventures. Some monsters are friendlier than others, and many of the hostile ones can only be defeated by a small army.

This seems like a design flaw. My character, Tuan, with CHA 24 and a charm spell, doesn't get to fight much anymore.

Of course, "friends" are no help in figuring out a puzzle adventure, and they do require some upkeep – healing spells and sometimes a gift of weapons. Also, your small army disappears at the end of each adventure, and you must start the next one alone. But there are a lot of peculiar effects:

In one adventure, described below, Tuan made friends with a vampire. It watched amiably while Tuan looted its treasury, and as he made "friends" of Arthur Godalming and Mina Harker. (Don't ask.) It helped kill a number of monsters which weren't impressed with Tuan's charisma, and watched while Tuan took their treasure for himself. Later Tuan, with his "friends" present, was told he would have to kill the vampire to complete his quest. This did not seem to alarm the vampire at all. However, when Tuan gave it a gold coin, it became furious and attacked him. (It was pounded flat.)

This weirdness is explained in the rules, but I think the programmer could have handled things better. I have never met anyone who let me have his bank account simply because he liked my boyish good looks. These "friends" should demand wages or a share of the loot.

### Weak Points

There are a number of flaws. The absence of graphics will bother some people. (But not me; how much "graphics" do you get with D&D?)

You have to bargain every time you buy something. Bargaining can be dull. I'd rather be adventuring.

The encumbrance rules are a bit silly. How come a guy with three suits of armor and six weapons is "lightly encumbered?" (On the other hand, how many players really want to worry about encumbrance?)

Lastly, there are a number of errors in the otherwise commendable documentation.

### Strategy

This is not a complicated game, but it does take some strategy. Most of it is obvious, but there are some tricks the designer may not have considered.

My central strategy is, I *don't play* unless I have a decent character. It may be possible to make your way in the world with CHA 4, but I wouldn't want to try. There is a suicide routine to dispose of really weak characters, but I have sometimes found it profitable to reboot the program and take character generation from the beginning. (Incidentally, the programmer could have eliminated this "strategy" if he had opted for point allocation instead of conventional dice-rolling as a basis for character generation.)

I accept combat with discretion, avoiding a "fair fight" like the place of honor at a hanging. Who wants to be fair? If threatened by multiple opponents, I flee. Monsters pursue on a percentage basis, but "friends" always flee with you. Using this tactic, I can pick off monsters one at a time. (The programmer could have made things harder by having monsters move in a group, or giving "friends" a chance of fleeing in the wrong direction.)

I wring every possible advantage out of the program. For example, if you try to move normally in a room with hostile monsters, the program tells you that you can't. This amounts to a "free" way to find out whether hostile monsters are present; the other methods are dangerous.

These "strategies" would never get past a DM, but they can be vital for a SWORDTHRUST adventure.

### The Testing Ground

Included on the master disk is "The King's Testing Ground," an introductory dungeon. It has much the same flavor as the T&T solo adventures.

You may lose a few characters here at first, but soon you will be running them through blindfolded. It is just a way to build up your characters; it has no other function or theme.

There is a subroutine which excludes experienced characters from the testing ground.

### The Vampyre Caves

The first "adventure supplement" released for SWORDTHRUST is a puzzle scenario. Your character has been victimized by a vampire. Unless he finds some way to remedy this lamentable condition, he probably will not survive the next sunrise. In other words, you solve the puzzle or you die. This is not a nice, safe way to pick up experience.

"Sunrise" is a good touch. The computer displays the game time (not real time) with each update. At 6:00 a.m., the time is displayed in reverse, and your character starts weakening. This helps to keep you from dawdling.

Like any adventure, this one can "wear out." It takes generations of characters to solve the puzzle, and a real hero to get through at all. But given these prerequisites, it is childishly easy. There might be some challenge in getting through with a weak character, but I feel little urge to try.

SWORDTHRUST is not the best game of its type; it's the only. It has flaws, but so does every milestone.

More adventures are promised. I cannot think of any games I await more eagerly.

*SWORDTHRUST (CE Software, 801 73rd St., Des Moines, IA 50312); $29.95. 48K disk for the Apple, DOS 3.3. Game comes with 28-page, 5½" x 8½" booklet, bagged. One player; playing time 30-60 minutes. Adventure cannot be saved. (Surviving characters can.) Published 1981.*

*THE VAMPYRE CAVES (CE Software); $24.95. 48K disk by Donald Brown for the Apple, DOS 3.3. One player; playing time 1-3 hours. Can be saved. Published 1981.*

# Designer's Notes

Currently, the most popular type of computer game is the "adventure" game. In it, the player directs the actions of a single character. The character picks up (and uses) various artifacts, slays monsters, and gathers gold. However, "adventure" falls far short of true FRPing, with combat-and-magic systems being laughably simple and inconsistent from one adventure to the next. It was my desire to write a game that came far closer to the mark. *SwordThrust* is what emerged, and I think I succeeded.

The feature that separates *SwordThrust* from most other games is that it automatically stores your character on the diskette between adventures. Most games have a character's life end when the adventure is finished, but a *SwordThrust* character will develop and grow from one adventure to the next.

A second nearly unique feature of *SwordThrust* is a complete and complex combat system (which is fully explained in the player's manual). All weapons are

divided into five classes (axe, bow, club, spear, and sword), and every player has a separate expertise level for each class. Successfully using a weapon in a class increases your experience IN THAT CLASS ONLY.

The newest "feature" that some adventure games have added is fancy high-resolution graphics. The game is supposedly much better if you actually see a dungeon, not merely have it described to you. It was a long and difficult decision, but I chose not to use any graphics in my adventure.

The first (though less important reason) for going with mere descriptions is that *SwordThrust* currently pushes at the edges of the Apple's limits. If I were to add pictures, I would have to remove some of the complexities of the game, and I was very unwilling to do that.

But, far more importantly, I have seen many of the graphics-based adventures, and none of them approaches even a medium-quality comic book, much less shows Frazetta-ish pictures. This is not the fault of the people who designed the games. The hardware available today simply cannot produce high-quality illustrations. Given the choice between vivid descriptions or bland illustrations, I chose the descriptions.

For now, that is. The *SwordThrust* products currently out were designed to give us a great deal of freedom in the future. We are experimenting with various different formats of games, including dungeons that can handle whole parties entering together, two-computer dungeons that pit two players against each other, fantasy wargames (where your character's gold equips your army), and even capabilities for designing your own adventures! With *SwordThrust*, we may finally have a universe that truly has no limits.

*– Donald Brown*

# DEUS EX MACHINA

# *Adventure Programs*

## by Neil Shapiro

If you're lucky enough to own or have access to an Apple II computer, you have available a dungeon master who will prove to be tireless, original, believable, and always ready to play. Some new fantasy role-playing programs which take full advantage of the Apple's hi-res graphics and central processing computer brain are the next best thing to actually setting out on a real-life adventure.

The games – *Ultima* from California Pacific Computer, *Hellfire Warrior* from Automated Simulations, and *Crush, Crumble and Chomp*, also from Automated Simulations – are all available on floppy disk. Once the disks are inserted into an Apple's drive, the electronic adventurer is off on any number of fantastic voyages.

### Hellfire Warrior

*Hellfire Warrior* is the sequel to Automated's much appreciated *Temple of Apshai* game which took Charles Roberts' honors as best computer game at Origins. *Hellfire* extends the dungeon another four levels and raises the playing system to new heights of fun and eye-catching animation.

*Hellfire's* dungeon-style levels are presented in the same manner as the game's predecessor. Walls depicting hallways and chambers are drawn onto the screen. As you move down a hallway or into a chamber the screen momentarily clears and then paints the new area you can see around you. You are represented by a small, detailed warrior figure on the screen.

One-key commands allow you to move your warrior persona in any direction, at one of nine speeds. As you move, you may examine walls you pass for secret doors and passages.

This is a true role-playing game; your character's attributes are first rolled for you by the computer. As your character progresses through the various levels, his attributes will reflect his improvement. Further, your character can be stored on disk – much as a lead miniature would be put away in its velvet-cushioned box – until the next expedition is formed. You may also save a game in progress, or save an image of the state of the dungeon.

While *Temple* offered the bare necessities of outfitting one's character before setting out, *Hellfire* has some additonal "shop" options. You will visit with Gulik the armorer where you can purchase five

types of armor, and five styles of weapons. Fnord the Apothecary sells healing salves and up to 13 different potions. Often, the effects of the potions are unexpected and they can change attributes either permanently or temporarily. Finally, you will want to visit with Malaclypse the Mage who charges what the traffic will (or won't) bear for enchanting weapons and armor and also offers various other magical goodies.

Once equipped as staunchly as your purse will allow, you'll note that *Hellfire* has much more of a sense of mission than *Temple* had. Goals on each of the four levels are distinctly different. So, even though combat remains the same, you do not tire of repetitiveness. Combat, by the way, is the same as in *Temple*. As you move about, various hi-res monsters chase after you. You can fight with a sword and watch your warrior self parry, slash and thrust or use a bow – even a magic arrow. As you fight and move, an on-screen display keeps track of your fatigue level, your wounds, and offers other info as to room location, weight you are carrying, type of monster you are facing, and Howard Cosell-like reports on combat results blow-by-blow.

The fifth dungeon level (levels being numbered 5-8 to match up with *Temple's* 1-4) is called the "Lower Reaches of Apshai" and will be the most familiar to players who are *Temple* aficionados. But, right away, you'll note the monsters are far more vicious. It suddenly will become apparent as to why *Hellfire* characters are rolled with far more experience points than new *Temple* characters. (This, by the way, is to my mind one of the game's few faults. As a sequel to *Temple* I would have preferred that *Hellfire* accept veteran characters from the previous game. Only way now is to use the edit mode and give your old vet enough experience to survive.)

The sixth level is a maze guarded by everything from centaurs to saytaurs to criotaurs. Finding your way out and solving the puzzle is half the fun – but for the faint of heart, an encrypted clue is included in the game's 64-page, illustrated manual.

The seventh level – "The Vault of the Dead" – puts you amidst hostile spirits. (At this point, most of my characters have rolled over and died in response to one threat or another.)

The final "Plains of Hell" level challenges you to rescue a warrior maiden from the eternal flames. (So far, she's always stayed cooking on my disk.)

*Hellfire Warrior* is likely to be a contender at the next Charles Roberts awards – but this time, the competition will be fierce.

### Ultima

*Ultima* is one of the most unique fantasy role-playing games I have seen – certainly the most unique one that will run on a computer. It offers a wealth of detail that makes its world a true sub-creation. (Sub-creation is a word originally coined by the wizardly philologist J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy Stories." It means that a world is believable and may be imaginatively entered into. There is enough detail and layering that all is not instantly apparent, and all the rules hang together without any belief-destroying contradictions.)

First thing you do in *Ultima* is to make a character disk, your attributes rolled by the computer. Then you decide your race and specialty. You can be a human, dwarf, hobbit or elf and specialties include warrior, wizard, cleric and thief. Various attributes may be point-traded for other attributes to enhance certain of your character's abilities. But, all of this is similar to dozens of other games. The fun begins when you – in the persona of your character – enter the richly detailed world of Ultima.

The player disk is replaced with the game disk and you are suddenly presented with a hi-res map. The map shows forests, mountains, plains, seas and yourself positioned there. One-key movement commands move you in any direction – by scrolling the map. For what you see on the screen is only a very small part of the entire world of Ultima.

As you move about you will note that there are cities, castles and dungeon entrances mixed in with the various terrain. Your first goal will be to head for the nearest city to spend a bit of the gold jin-

gling in your novice-sized purse. On your way, hope that you meet no wandering monsters or thieves – in your at-the-start condition of being weaponless you would have to try to run away.

Once you reach a city your disk drive will whirr, the screen will clear and in place of the strategic map the in-city map display will be drawn. When in a city, you move your figure into various shops. The hi-res city is protected by little guards who are pictorially more muscular than your own displayed form. This is a good point to keep in mind as *Ultima's* rules allow you to attempt stealing from the stores – but if caught by an alert shopkeeper, all those guards will descend on you.

Also, watch out for the bard – there's one in every city. And, like a Victorian's dream of a stage entertainer come true, the bard is a happy leech who will follow you around only to steal the shirt off your back.

In the city you can buy (and sell) weapons, armor, transportation, magic spells, and food. Magic costs experience points as well as gold – but you will likely need some for dungeon activities (wizards will find the magic is easier to buy and can carry more). Weapons, armor, and transportation change with the game's level of technology.

That's right, the level of technology advances the longer you play the game, and as your character advances in levels of expertise. *Ultima* begins in medieval times but will literally take you into the space age. More on that later.

Once you leave the city you will want to set out for the nearest castle. Castles too have their own hi-res display of a walled courtyard with various nooks and crannies. Also present is a jailed princess restlessly pacing her cell, a king ready to talk business or honor, a lot of very, very, very muscular guards and a few magic pools. (And another thief – this time a jester.)

In the castle, you will want to visit the king. For gold, the king has the power of increasing your hit points. And, if you offer him your service as a token of your fealty he will send you on a quest. It will be necessary to complete many quests before winning the game – before it is even clear *how* to win the game.

A good strategy at the beginning of the game involves traveling between close-by cities and castles. Keep fighting the wandering threats that crop up and in that way – if victorious in battle – you will slowly accumulate some gold. The gold can be used in cities to buy better weapons and armor, and in the castles to enhance your hit points. In this way, you can gradually build yourself into a more formidable character.

When you are sure you are ready it is time to make your first expedition into one of *Ultima's* many dungeons. But the dungeons are not for the faint of heart nor the shy of hit points.

Entering a dungeon puts you in the three-dimensional dungeon display. You see the walls and chambers done in a perspective as if you were really walking through these darksome lairs. Hidden traps abound so you will have to use the "I" for inform and search key often.

Ladders will tempt you to climb down to a lower level, but be sure you know how to get back to the entrance or you can quickly become lost. At this point you may be glad that you purchased a ladder-up spell back in the last city you were in. Such a spell will let you create a ladder to a higher level if you find yourself in over your head.

There are force field barriers in the dungeon and more than thirty various monsters, all done in hi-res detail. You fight them with one-key commands either with your weapons or with your magic. If you triumph you gain in both experience and gold. If you lose, there go your hit points.

As the game continues you will find that the challenge becomes more and more intense. But, in counterpoint, your alternatives become richer. As technology improves you will find that the frigate you thought so useful a few levels back now looks exceedingly primitive. And that greatsword you were so proud of earlier looks like an antique compared to what you can buy now. (But to tell you more would spoil the real thrill of discovery that *Ultima* provides the new player.)

You will find that *Ultima* pushes the Apple II computer right up to its state-of-the-art limits. As a program it is amazing, as a role-playing game it is a gem.

**Crush, Crumble and Chomp**

While the above two games are both fairly complex, you may wish for a beer-and-skittles type computer game that you could play at one sitting. That maybe even you could explain to a wife, girlfriend or neighbor?

If so, get ready for the hilarious new *Crush, Crumble and Chomp*. Automated Simulations' newest entry is a computerized melding of *Monsters! Monsters!* and *The Creature that Ate Sheboygan*. Billed as "The Movie Monster Game," this disk turns you into a rampaging beast.

You can play the role as Goshilla the lizard creature, the sea-loving Kraken, the spidery Arachnis, the globular Glob, the maniacal Mechismo or the flying Mantra. Or, if you would like, the rules booklet details how to roll your own monster persona.

Once you've decided your monster, you choose where you want to destroy and rampage. Hi-resolution maps of New York, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Tokyo are included on disk. The maps show buildings, parks, skyscrapers, bridges, roads and water.

Also on the map with you are animated civilians, cars, police vehicles, tanks, national guard units and helicopters. The first rule of monsterdom is – if it moves, eat it!

Monsters must grab and eat to keep their hunger level low enough that they do not go berserk.

Some monsters spit fire, others leave webs behind. All is done in real-time animation. And, the animation is so well done that playing *CCC* is like watching a late movie.

You even have a separate pictorial display that shows the position of your monster's head. This is important in aiming the little fellow's often worse-than-bad breath.

Various scenarios award points for destruction alone, for surviving a long time, for combat against soldiers, or for all of the above. But no matter what scenario you choose it is obvious that the programmer was a human – after all, the monster is always doomed. Whether you are gradually wiped out by the stings of the strange little soft creatures, or the mad scientist himself gets you (to the accompaniment of an on-screen "EEE-AARRGHH" message) your monstrous days are numbered.

But keep on crushing, crumbling and chomping right up to the final curtain call.

*HELLFIRE WARRIOR (Automated Simulations); $39.95. Designed by Jeff Johnson and Jon Freeman. Program on disk or cassette for the Apple, TRS-80 and Pet. One player; playing time hours or days. Can be saved. Published 1980.*

*ULTIMA (California Pacific); $39.95. 48K disk by Lord British for the Apple II. One player; playing time hours or days. Can be saved. Published 1981.*

*CRUSH, CRUMBLE AND CHOMP (Automated Simulations); $29.95. Disk for the Apple and TRS-80; cassette for the TRS-80 and Atari. One player; playing time 10-60 minutes. Published 1981.*

# Diplomacy Variants

## by Lewis Pulsipher

The first science fiction and fantasy games distributed on a non-local basis were variants of *Diplomacy*. The earliest of these preceded the simple space wargame *War of the Empires*, described in *The Dragon* 3, by one to two years, i.e., 1964 or '65.

*Diplomacy* is a multi-player board wargame known to most strategic games players – *Risk* and *Diplomacy* are probably the most widely known conflict games in the world if one excludes traditional games such as chess. It is presently marketed in the native language in Germany, Brazil and Argentina, and in English in most western European countries.

The heart of *Diplomacy* is negotiation between the seven players who represent the Great Powers of World War I: Austria, England, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Turkey. (It is not a simulation, of course – Turkey and Germany were not comparable in the war but Turkey is as strong in the game.) Facilitating the negotiations are simple game mechanics utilizing simultaneous movement of a total of 34 armies and fleets, with no luck involved. Deals and alliances are made and broken during the game, and no one can be certain whether other players will react as expected; in other words, the players themselves provide the chance element.

In the mid-60's, science fiction fans organized postal games of *Diplomacy*, players negotiating by letter and sending movement orders to a non-playing referee, who reproduced the orders and sent a copy to each player. Wargamers soon became involved, and today about 2,000 people worldwide play postal *Diplomacy*, and one magazine devoted entirely to articles about *Diplomacy* circulates to 1,000 people. Over 500 postal games have been completed, each requiring two to three years or more. Nearly 100 people act as referees, most editing and duplicating their own fanzines.

One of the attractions of *Diplomacy* is the simple but flexible game mechanics. The rules can be adapted to construct a strategic game on almost any subject requiring more than two sides. No other game, except chess, has engendered so

many variations. *Diplomacy* variants differ from variations of other wargames in their scope. Variants often include a new board, and sometimes many rules are changed or added so that a virtually new game is the result.

There are over 600 published variants, ranging from a single rule change to monsters that retain only two aspects of *Diplomacy*, the "support" rule and the multiplayer format. Since postal *Diplomacy* fandom grew out of science fiction fandom, SF/F variants naturally gained some following; *Middle Earth II*, in fact, was the first variant played by mail that was not merely a team version of standard *Diplomacy*. Because variants are usually amateur undertakings, often designed by someone with no previous experience and little long-term interest and reproduced by short run methods such as mimeograph, a great many are inferior games. Moreover, most variants are designed with postal, not face-to-face, play in mind. As a consequence of these shortcomings most variants are out of print, though there are archivists who can supply photocopies of many at cost ("variants banks").

The variants I describe below are usually exceptional and often meet the best professional standards, but I have included all generally available SF/F variants, whatever the merit of the game. Abstract and near-future variants, which sometimes have titles that sound like SF/F, are not included. I have listed out of print variants for those who want full exposure to this fascinating sub-hobby. The title of any variant which cannot reasonably be played face-to-face is followed by an ampersand (&); an asterisk (*) indicates that a non-playing referee is required.

### Types of Variants

These variants can be divided into eight categories which will be examined in turn. These are:

1. "Balanced" variants based on Tolkien's books
2. "Realistic" Tolkien-based
3. Others based on fantasy stories and novels
4. Fantasy variants not based on any story
5. Variants based on SF novels and stories
6. Other miscellaneous SF
7. Other SF depicting a single solar system
8. Other SF covering many solar systems

A letter and number code and the designer's name follow the title. The code is my rating of the variant, to help guide the reader. The first letter is an expression of the care and skill with which the game and map have been constructed. A is best, E is worst. I have assumed that good play-balance is a very desirable characteristic, that is, each player should have about the same chance of winning the game. The number indicates how much the rules of *Diplomacy* have been changed, from 1 = few changes to 5 = almost everything changed. The second letter indicates how faithful the variant is to its novel or to the genre as a whole; believability and atmosphere, a feel of science fiction or of fantasy, also come into this, and the rating is of course subjective. A is most faithful, E least. Consequently the "A" rated variants are the best, the reader choosing for himself what complexity level he desires since changes from standard rules usually entail greater complexity.

Following the description of each variant is an indication of how it may be obtained. DW (short for *Diplomacy World*) and VP (short for *SF&F Variant Package*) are explained at the end of the article.

### Tolkien Variants

Tolkien variants are derived more or less from J.R.R. Tolkien's work, especially *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Some depict the war at the end of the Third Age, a few cover other eras, and others do not pretend to simulate any particular period. There is even one unpublished variant depicting events in a *Fourth* Age. There are special problems with these scenarios. The War of the Ring is simply not a multi-player situation: with minor exceptions, no negotiation is conceivable. Moreover, Sauron's physical resources ensured his victory if the Ring had not been destroyed. Given the scale of the *Diplomacy* game-system, it is virtually impossi-

ble to design anything that is both a balanced multi-player game *and* good simulation.

With one exception, all these variants use a multi-player format, since this is the heart of any *Diplomacy*-type game. Otherwise they fall into two categories, those variants which value play-balance above simulation, and those which emphasize "realistic" elements at the expense of play-balance. Unfortunately, the latter are badly flawed by the need to make Mordor almost as strong as all other countries combined (and even then it is unrealistically weak). If just one non-Mordor country is poorly played, or if one player decides that a certain second place finish is worth throwing the game to Mordor, the game is virtually over before it begins. This often happens. If all players are good and experienced, non-Mordor forces may reduce Mordor to a reasonable size, after which play resembles a normal *Diplomacy* free-for-all.

### Balanced Tolkien Variants

These are usually called "Middle-Earth Diplomacy".

*Middle Earth II* (B 1 E, Don Miller) was the earliest science fiction or fantasy game ever played, to my knowledge, except in a local area (e.g., the original *Lankhmar*). The five players are Mordor, Gondor, Rohan, Rhovanion, and Arnor. Rules are standard, and the game has little resemblance to any Middle-Earth period. VP.

*Middle Earth V* (B 1 D, Lew Pulsipher) departs from the earlier mold with an initial setup which scatters each player's units: Elves, Men of the North, Gondor, Mordor, Harad-Rhun, Dwarves, and Angmar. VP (revised version).

*Middle Earth VIII* (B 1 E, L. Pulispher) is an 8-player simple variant with only one move-season per game year, again without much "simulation" to it. Available in an issue of *News from Bree* from Hartley Patterson, 10 Waterside, Wooburn Green, Bucks, England.

Unavailable variants:

*Middle Earth I* (C. Wells). Unfinished.
*Middle Earth III* (D. Miller). Unfinished?
*Middle Earth IV* (B 1 D, B. Mebane).
*Middle Earth VI* (C 1 D, J. Biehl). Finished, but map never published.
*Middle Earth VII* (B 1 E, L. Pulsipher).

### Realistic Tolkien

These variants always include a Ring piece which is secretly carried about by an army; double and triple strength armies; and a very powerful Mordor with units and home centers scattered about the map. If the Ring is taken into Barad-dur, one of the non-Mordor players (usually the Ringbearer) wins. In the more complex variants, especially the two *Downfall* versions, there are pieces for Nazgul and most of the important personalities of the trilogy. No matter how ingenious they are, however, they suffer from the constraints mentioned above and are nice to look through but seldom good to play. The only one of these currently available is *Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and The Return of the King I** (C 4 A, Hartley Patterson). VP.

Unavailable variants:

*Mordor vs. the World I** (D. Miller). Not seen.
*Mordor vs. the World II** (D. Miller). Not seen.
*Mordor vs. the World III** (D 2 C, D. Miller).
*Mordor vs. the World IV** (C 2 C, D. Miller).
*Third Age I** (C 2 C, B. Libby).
*Third Age II** (D 2 C, D. Morris and R. Sharp).
*Lord of the Rings I** (C 3 B, J. Key).
*Lord of the Rings II** (C 3 B, J. Key).
*Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King II** (C 4 A, R. Sacks).
*The Great Years** (D 3 C, K. Neuman).
*Beleriand* (C 3 C, S. Doubleday). *First Age*/Silmarillion.
*War of the Great Jewels* (B 2 B, L. Pulsipher). *First Age*/Silmarillion.

In addition there are two atypical Tolkien variants, both named *War of the Ring*. The first (A 1 B, L. Pulsipher) is an attempt to synthesize the two styles, but with emphasis leaning toward play balance. The map looks more or less like the "real" thing, down to a chain of spaces along the Misty Mountains. The seven players in the standard version are Mordor, Harad, Saruman, Free Peoples of Rhovanion, Free Peoples of Eriador, Evil Folk of the North, and Gondor-Rohan, each with one fortress and one double army. Mordor has four armies altogether instead of three, rather like Russia in standard *Diplomacy*. There are several other versions for 4-6 players depicting various invasions in Gondorian history, and finally a mild version of the "realistic" type for those who prefer that style. DW.

The second is the commercially published game (D 1 C, T. Drake, Fantasy Games Unlimited). The thin board, few counters, and turgid rules are in no way worth the ten dollar price. This is a two-player game using the *Diplomacy* game-system – supply centers, support, same movement rules. Considering the precedents the designer had to draw on, this is a poor effort at best.

### Fantasy Based on Novels

There are six variants based on R.E. Howard's Conan stories, all suffering more or less from the unfavorable configuration of major powers on the Hyborian map.

*Hyborian Age II* (C 1 C, Burt Labelle) is a simple variant which the designer felt was a failure, though some players liked it. The Great Powers are Aquilonia, Stygia, Cimmeria, Turan, and a federation of Ophir, Corinthia, and Koth. VP.

*Hyborian Diplomacy* (HA V) (C 2 B, Jim Peters with revision by C.F. von Metzke) is ostensibly a variant for 2-11 players. However, this merely amounts to adding or subtracting players without changing anything else, so most if not all versions are poorly balanced. DW.

A completely satisfactory Conan variant has yet to appear.

*Earthsea Diplomacy* (B 2 E, Thomas Galloway) uses the map of the setting for Ursula Le Guin's trilogy. New rules allow greater mobility and versatility for fleets. Published in DW Vol. 1, number 6, now out of print; but available from variant banks.

Other variants:

*Dalarna I* (C 3 D, J. Leeder).
*Dalarna II* (C 3 D, J. Leeder). Both based on *Well of the Unicorn*, F. Pratt.
*Witch World I* (E 3 B, J. Robertson).
*Witch World II* (B 2 B, L. Pulsipher). Both based on A. Norton's *Witch World* series.

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*Hyborian Age I* (C 1 C, G. Gygax and L. Pulsipher).
*Hyborian Age III* (D 1 C, T. Hubbard).
*Hyboriax I* (HA IV) (L. Dunning). Not seen.
*Hyboriax II* (HA VI) (B 4 B, L. Dunning).
*Melnibone/Black Sword/Young Kingdoms* (two versions known by various names). (B 3 B, K. St. Andre).
*Age of the Young Kingdoms* (B 2 B, ? Neuman). Both of the above based on Michael Moorcock's *Elric* series.

### Fantasy Not Based on Any Story

All but one of these are magic-system variants, that is, rules for heroes, wizards, and spells grafted onto the standard *Diplomacy* board and rules.

*The Dying Earth* (A 4 B, L. Pulsipher) is not related to Jack Vance's famous series. It represents an earth climbing out of the savagery following the exhaustion of many natural resources. Each player (2-11 or more) begins with one army, a hero, and a wizard, at a center he selects. The wizards may find items that permit "building" of more wizards and heroes. A wizard may know only three of the six possible spells, casting only one each turn. The hero adds to the strength of a unit he accompanies. Heroes and wizards have no combat strength alone, and may be in the same space as an army or fleet. VP.

*Sword and Sorcery Diplomacy* (A 4 B, Scott Rich) uses the usual seven countries and includes many more spells and a different system for determining how many wizards and heroes a player may possess. A king piece is added. DW.

The two variants above resemble each other in some ways because Scott and I started them independently and then helped each other with playtesting. Neither is in any way based on *Dungeons and Dragons*. If any game is a precedent, it is the old fantasy postal role-playing game *Midgard*.

*Song of the Night* (A 2 A, L. Pulsipher) uses a new board and an expanded and revised *Dying Earth* system. The complexity rating is for the simplest version. With the addition of exploration, non-human creatures and monsters, and magical treasure, the rating can go up to 5; it is then the most comprehensive and most radical of all fantasy variants. 2-7 may play. In *Diplomacy Games and Variants*, see below for details.

Other variants:
*Magic Diplomacy II* (C 4 C, ?). Magic I never published.
*Dungeons and Diplomacy I* (?, J. Maiden). Unfinished.
*Dungeons and Diplomacy II**& (C 5 B, L. Dunning).
*Lords of Law and Chaos* (B 2 B, L. Pulsipher).

### Variants Based on SF Novels and Stories

Owing partly to copyright questions, only one variant in this category is readily available, though many exist.

*Barsoom I* (A 4 A, L. Pulsipher) is based on E.R. Burrough's Martian series. The eight players are Black men, Yellow men, Helium, Dusar, Jahar, Kaol, Ptarth, and Duhor-Amhor. Armies move between cities on dotted lines while air fleets move in normal *Diplomacy* type spaces and may descend to, or drop an army onto, a city. The board is global, i.e., the east and west edges connect for movement purposes. VP.

Other variants:
*Foundation I*& (B 5 C, F. Mulhauser).
*Foundation II*& (A 5 C, R. Brooks).
*Foundation III*& (A 5 C, R. Brooks).
*Barsoomian Blitz (Barsoom II)* (D 3 B, K. St. Andre).
*Kregen* (C 2 C, K. St. Andre).
*Cities in Flight* (A 3 D, T. Galloway).

### Miscellaneous SF

*Timesteps* (A 3 B, L. Pulsipher), for any number of players, is based on the paratime/multidimension probability idea (*Corridors of Time, Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*, and other novels). Each player begins with the same number of combat units and paratime transmitters, with which all are trying to conquer virgin, high resource worlds with the configuration of our earth, but with different supply center locations in each dimensional copy. Players may move about in a world as usual, or use a transmitter to move to a world adjacent in paratime. VP.

*Quantum Space* (A 2 C, T.A. McCloud), for any number of players, is a semi-abstract space variant. Each player has a planet of eight spaces and four centers, with two space fleets and two armies. Each planet is surrounded by an "orbit" space. All orbit spaces are adjacent to a hyperspace with an infinite number of positions. To gain centers one must break into an enemy orbit and either land a fleet or convoy an army down to the planet. VP.

Other variants:
*There are Aliens among Us** (B 1 E, P. Willey).
*Transmat*& (C 1 E, P. Willey).

### SF Covering a Single Solar System

*Lunatic Diplomacy III* (A 2 C, Thomas Galloway). In this variant a planet divided into several spaces is surrounded by many satellites following one another in set orbits. The orbits intersect in some cases, and space fleets occupying satellites may move from one orbit to another. After every move each satellite moves one place in its orbit, changing many positional relationships among fleets and supply centers. VP.

Other variants:
*Lunatic I* (A 2 C, T. Galloway).
*Lunatic II* (A 2 C, T. Galloway).
*Interplanetary* (E 5 B, G. Reed).
*Apposition* (B 2 A, P. Willey).
*Ecliptic* (B 5 A, P. Willey).

### SF Covering Many Star-systems

*Between Galaxies I* (A 4 B, L. Pulsipher), for 2-9 players, uses a hexagonal grid with entire galaxies depicted on it. Each galaxy has a supply point value, with five points supporting one fleet. Fleets may move up to three hexes but in straight lines only, and cannot end a move in intergalactic space. Any number of fleets of one player may occupy a hex. VP.

*Between Galaxies II* (A 3 B, L. Pulsipher), for 2-9 players, uses the same idea as above but in simpler form and with a toroidal board so that there are no corner positions. Only one fleet may occupy a hex, and normal supply centers are used. Published in DW Vol 1. number 4; now out of print, but available from variant banks.

*The Star Kings* (A 3 B, L. Pulsipher), for 5-8 players, also uses a hex grid. There is one fleet per star-system, and players can also obtain fortresses which double as matter transmitters. This permits interesting starting positions with home centers scattered about the board, and supply lines are important. VP.

Other variants:
*Cosmic Diplomacy** (E 2 D, S. Trembly).
*Galactic Diplomacy* (A 4 A, L. Lakofka).
*Interstellar Diplomacy I (& II)*& (B 5 A, L. Pulsipher).
*Interstellar Diplomacy III*& (A 5 B, L. Pulsipher).
*Interstellar Diplomacy IV*& (A 5 A, R. Prevot).
*Cosmic Diplomacy*& (C 5 A, L. Dunning).

There are several variants with science fiction titles for which I have no particulars: *Space Station Ultra, Interstellar Conquest,* and *Proxima Centauri.*

### Availability

"DW" in the lists above refers to *Diplomacy World*, a magazine devoted entirely to *Diplomacy*. It is necessary to order an entire issue to obtain the variants section. The magazine is printed in reduced type and the maps tend to be too small to be used with the large wooden *Diplomacy* pieces, though wargame counters are satisfactory substitutes. Variants available are:

*Sword and Sorcery Diplomacy* (Volume II, number 3).
*War of the Ring* (III, 1).
*Hyborian Diplomacy* (IV, 1).

Each issue is $1.25 from Walt Buchanan, Lebanon, Indiana 46052. They are in short supply; if out of print, the variants can be obtained from a variant bank (see below).

A copy of the latest issue of DW costs $1.25 from Jerry Jones, 1854 Wagner St., Pasadena, California 91107.

"VP" above refers to the *Science Fiction and Fantasy Variants Package*. This is a collection of variants printed in full size photo-offset. Many maps are large enough for the wooden pieces. Included along with the variants listed in this article are two pages of simple SF/F rules which can be incorporated into other variants. A copy costs $3.00 postpaid from Lewis Pulsipher, 700 Morreene Rd. Apt. C-11, Durham, NC 27705.

*Diplomacy Games and Variants* is a magazine-size 24 page booklet published by Strategy Games, London. Three 17 x 11 inch maps are included, as well as introductory information and simple variants to complement the more complex games. Among the latter is *Song of the Night*, mentioned above. In Britain order from Games Centre, 16 Hanway St., London W1A 2LS. In America order from Lou Zocchi, 01956 Pass Road, Gulfport, MS 30501 for $5.50 postpaid.

"Variant banks" sell copies of many out of print variants at cost of photocopying and postage. In America write Rod Walker, 1273 Crest Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024 (catalog $1.10), or Fred Davis Jr., 1427 Clairidge Rd., Baltimore, MD 21207. In Britain write Andy Tringham, 25 Auckland Rd., London SE19 2DR.

For more information about *Diplomacy*, either get a sample issue of *Diplomacy World* or buy *Gamers Guide to Diplomacy*, available from the Avalon Hill Company and in game shops.

* * * * *

*Great, Lew, but you seem to consistently rate yourself "A" or "B". Does anyone out there have a second opinion?*
*– FJ*

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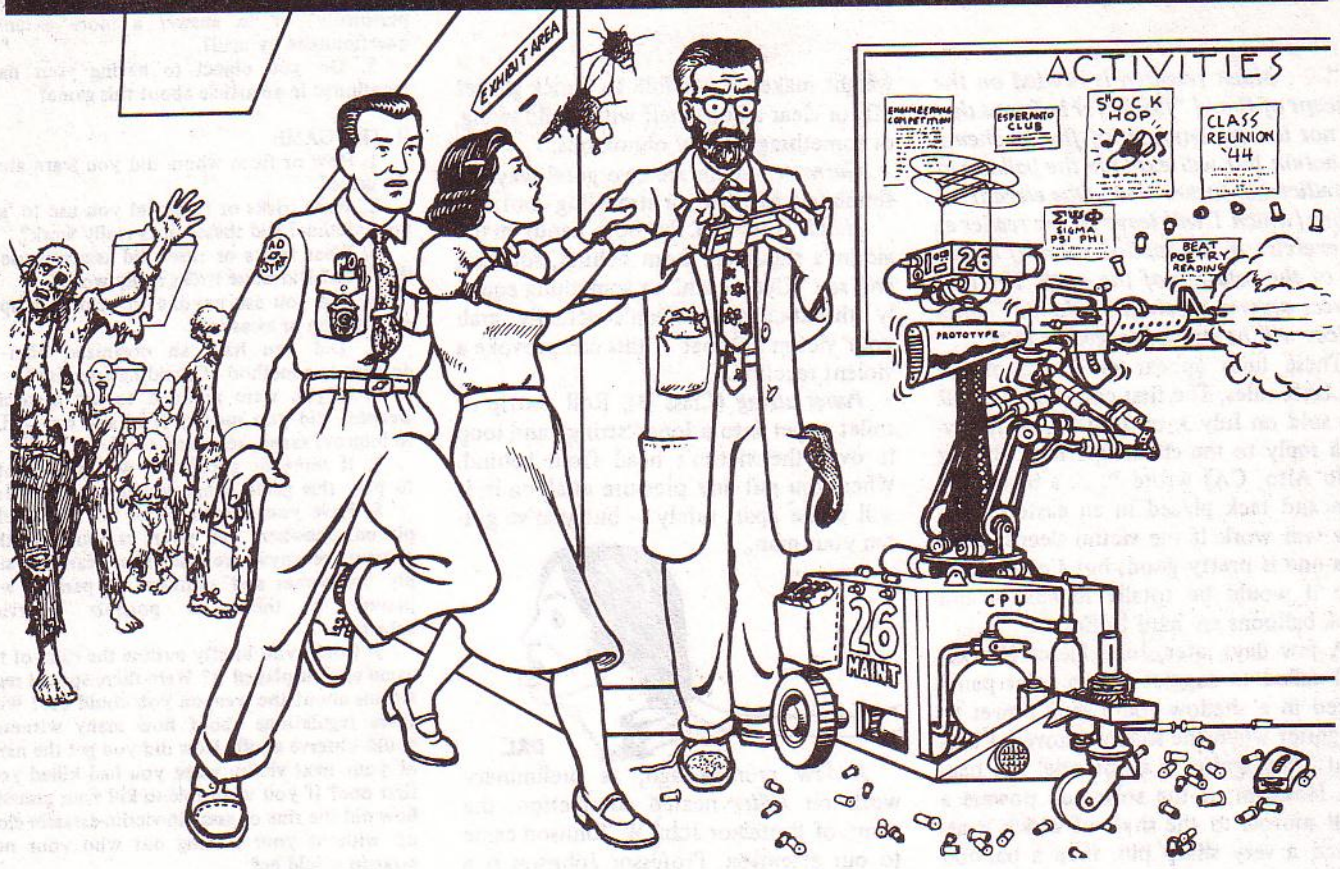


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# KILLER

*". . . Much research is needed on the concept of timed "fuses" for balloons that do not involve any sort of fire or chemical action but will explode the balloon at a predictable future time. One elegant solution (which I will leave to the reader as an exercise in misapplied science) makes use of the rotation of the earth. The first correct answer received at the SJ Games offices will be acknowledged in TSG . . ."*

These lines appear on p. 23 of the KILLER rules. The first copy of KILLER was sold on July 3; on July 11, we received a reply to the challenge! Rich Bruner (Palo Alto, CA) wrote ". . . a black balloon and tack placed in an eastern window will work if the victim sleeps late." This one is pretty good, but I'm not positive it would be totally reliable – and black balloons are hard to find.

A few days later, John Pierce (Burke, VA) called to suggest that a solar panel placed in a shadow could send power to an igniter when the shadow moved. Comment: Any igniter is a potential fire hazard. However, if the solar cell powers a small motor, to the shaft of which is attached a very sharp pin, then a balloon could be detonated without any danger at all!

We also received a suggestion that a pre-focused magnifying glass could explode a balloon when the sun moved. Again, this is a fire hazard; I can't recommend it. Better stick with electromechanical devices.

*However* . . . none of these gadgets is the one I had in mind. In fact (how's this for an added hint?) the device I'm thinking of operates totally independently of the sun! Got any inspirations?

*– Steve Jackson*

### New Weapons

Several good new KILLER weapons were suggested by players at the Origins tournament, including –

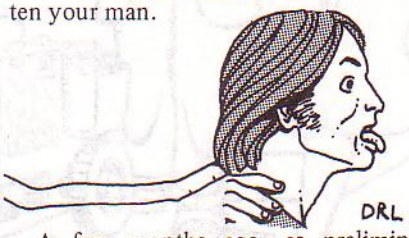
*Sock blackjack* (Class A). One sock rolled up inside another one. Hit your victim on the head, and he's dead. This one is disgustingly simple, and certainly should have been in the book. But don't put anything other than cloth in the sock.

*Towel club* (Class B). A towel is rolled up loosely lengthwise and secured with three or four rubber bands. It is then used like the blackjack (above). This one is Class B because its increased size and weight makes it possible to knock glasses off, or clear a bookshelf with a wild swing, or something equally obnoxious.

*Garrotte.* There are two good ways to simulate a garrotte, or strangling cord:

*Hands* (Class A). Put both hands on the victim's shoulders from behind, squeeze, and say "Gyeecccch" or something equally throat-curdling. Don't actually grab your victim's throat – this can provoke a violent reaction.

*Paper string* (Class B). Roll a strip of toilet paper into a long "string" and loop it over the victim's head from behind. When you put any pressure at all on it, it will come apart safely – but you've gotten your man.




A few months ago, as preliminary work on *Killer* neared completion, the name of Professor John W. Johnson came to our attention. Professor Johnson is a professional folklorist at Indiana University . . . and, as it turns out, he has been studying the various informal manifestations of this game for some time.

Professor Johnson was good enough to share some of his data with us, and to write the afterword to our *Killer* rulebook. We're happy to be able to help him by reprinting his questionnaire here. Those of you who have played the game can help Dr. Johnson by answering his questions and sending them to the address below. At last . . . a professional study of gaming . . . !

Note: If your only experience with the game is through the SJ Games rulebook, please say so when you send your replies.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information concerning the game "Killer" (also called "Victim," "KAOS," "The Assassination Game," "Ping Pong Murder," etc. The data is being sought by a professional folklorist, Professor J. W. Johnson, of Indiana University. The material will be analyzed for use in the teaching of folklore, and will possibly be published in a professional journal of folklore. This game is known to have been played on many campuses and elsewhere (in many forms) for a number of years, and folklorists are interested in learning all they can about it. If you have played this game, your response would be appreciated.

I. BACKGROUND DATA

Folklorists are interested in placing data in a social context. All information requested in this section, however, is optional.

1. Name and address.
2. Would you agree to be interviewed personally, or to answer a more extensive questionnaire by mail?
3. Do you object to having your name mentioned in an article about this game?

II. THE GAME

1. How or from whom did you learn about the game?
2. What tricks or ruses did you use to 'kill' your victims? Did these tricks really work?
3. What tricks or ruses did assassins use to 'kill' you? Did these tricks really work?
4. Did you ask anyone to help you 'spot' your victim or assassin?
5. Did you have an organized plan of defense or a method of avoiding assassins?
6. If you were required to use a specific weapon, did you modify it in any way – i.e., to improve range, accuracy, etc.?
7. If someone asked you why you wanted to play this game, what would you tell them?
8. Have you ever heard of this game being played elsewhere on your campus, another campus, or anywhere else? If so, can you supply the names and addresses of persons who played it there as possible interview subjects?
9. Could you briefly outline the rules of the game as you played it? Were there special regulations about the weapon you could use? Were there regulations about how many witnesses could observe a kill? How did you get the name of your next victim when you had killed your first one? If you were able to kill your assassin, how did the ring of assassin-victim-assassin close up without your finding out who your new assassin would be?
10. Other comments:

Please write your answers on as many sheets of paper as necessary, and send them to:

Professor John W. Johnson
Folklore Department
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

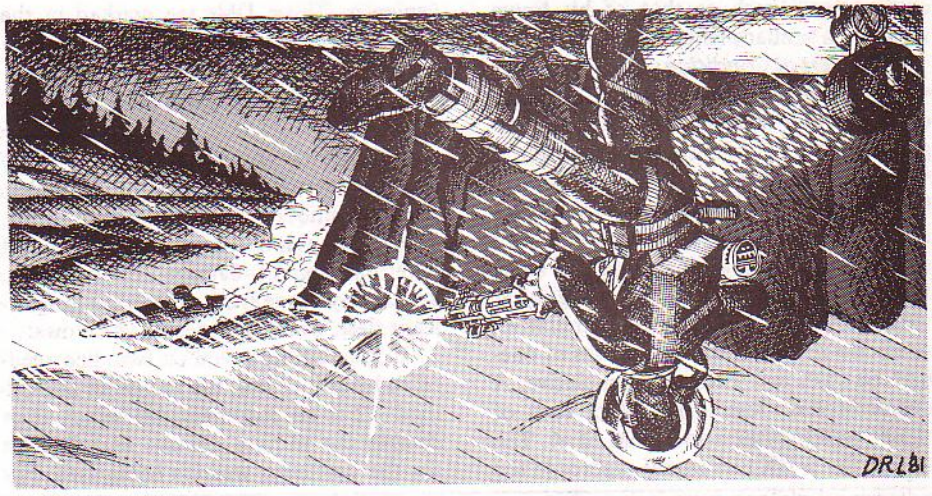
Your help is appreciated.

# Contest

This month's contest is for killers. We're looking for more science-fiction weapon simulators . . . safe ways to "kill" somebody in a futuristic manner. Entries should be written up in the form used in the actual KILLER rules. Entries will be judged on the basis of cleverness and originality – but *unsafe* entries will automatically be out.

All entries will become the property of TSG/SJ Games. First place will win a 12-issue subscription; second place will receive a 6-issue subscription. Winners (and any good runners-up) will also appear in TSG. We reserve the right to award fewer (or no) prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. Entries must be postmarked no later than October 31, 1981.

# Expanded Combat for *Traveller*




## by William A. Barton

*What if my character is hanging upside down from a slow-moving air/raft in a heavy wind on a 2G planet with an exotic atmosphere panic-firing a tripod weapon without the tripod at a 2-foot-tall opponent evading at medium range in a fast-moving ATV at night in a snow storm after being wounded?*

The basic *Traveller* combat system was designed for use with the weaponry and characters of *Traveller* Book One. When confined to Book One characters and weapons, there are few conflicts. But since the advent of the basic *Traveller* system, several expansions have been released introducing new weaponry and more highly skilled characters. *Mercenary* is perhaps the worst offender in this regard. Using its weaponry, particularly gauss rifles and fusion guns, even an unskilled character literally cannot miss most shots – even when the target is in battledress! And skill levels of Combat Rifleman 5+ or High Energy Weapons 3+ are not uncommon among characters created with the *Mercenary* generation system.

In basic *Traveller* there are only a few negative die modifiers to your to-hit roll: mainly those for evading and for drawing and firing a weapon in the same round. A few more are added in *Snapshot* and *Azhanti High Lightning*, but really not enough to match the almost unbeatable combination of *Mercenary* weaponry and high skill. To retain some semblance of challenge in *Traveller* fire fights, the referee may be hard pressed to devise negative modifiers on the spot to reflect the conditions peculiar to each combat situation.

The problem that often arises is this: Unless he's kept careful record of modifiers used in each particular situation, sooner or later the referee, being human, is going to use a different modifier from the one he's used before in the exact same situation. And of course there'll always be at least one player who will call him on it.

To avoid such conflicts in my *Traveller* campaign, I've worked out several sets of guidelines to cover the various situations that may crop up during the course of a *Traveller* session. With the advice and consent of my players, I've formulated a set of standardized combat modifiers to reflect a wide range of conditions under which combat may occur. I've also devised a system of automatic hits and misses, a concept common to most role-playing games, but absent in *Traveller*. This guarantees that even the most skilled character with the most powerful weapon will miss on occasion – and gives everyone a slight chance at a lucky shot now and then. Adoption of such a set of combat rules should help smooth out just about any *Traveller* play session.

### Combat Die Modifiers

I've divided all my combat DMs – both negative and positive – into five basic areas: Modifiers of movement, of situation, of action, of environment, and of condition.

*Modifiers of Movement:* These are DMs applied to the roll to hit due to movement on the part of either the character who is firing or his target or, in some cases, both. These DMs are all cumulative, i.e., if the person firing and his target are both running, a total DM of -6 is applied to the roll to hit (-3 + -3 = -6). Likewise, if a target is evading in a slow-moving air/raft at medium range, the firer is in a slow-moving ATV, and both are closing range, the total DM is -5 (-2 for evading at medium range, -2 for target flying slowly, no maneuvers, -3 for firing from a slow-moving vehicle, +1 for firer closing range, and +1 for target closing range). This, of course, does not take in account additional modifiers for weapon's range, armor or skill in the weapon, all of which would be added when determining the final roll to hit.

*Modifiers of Situation:* These concern the actual physical condition of either the character firing or his target. These include any type of cover the target may be behind, the firer or target (or both) taking a prone postion or being at different altitudes, the firer shooting from different positions or from uncertain footing, and firing from extremes of range, long and short. Many of these will be cumulative, but some will not, i.e., a target under cover may claim only one of the four states of cover, usually at the referee's discretion. Similarly, a character cannot fire at a target at extreme range and at point-blank range at the same time. One can fire at a target at a lower altitude (+1) under soft cover (-1) while prone (+1) during an earthquake (uncertain footing, -3) for a total DM of -2.

*Modifiers of Action:* These are caused by some action taken on the part of the character firing or by the target. Several of these are taken directly from GDW's own works, such as those for panic firing, snapshots or use of telescopic sights. Others include taking an aimed shot, moving to fire at a target to the rear or side, firing while performing various acrobatics or using psionics to aid targeting, etc. Few of these modifiers are cumulative with each other, most actions precluding any other, but most can be combined with DMs from the other sections (i.e., firing at a stationary target already hit in a previous round while lying prone on a slow-moving vehicle).

*Modifiers of Environment:* These are dependent on the physical surroundings of the person firing or his target. They include modifiers for firing in adverse weather conditions and in various gravity fields. Familiarity on the part of a character with any of the environmental situations described may negate certain modifiers, especially if the firer is in a *very* familiar environment, such as that of his home world or a similar planet.

*Modifiers of Condition:* These are based on conditions such as the lack of skill of a character in a weapon, the size of the target, the physical condition of the firer – wounded, fatigued, intoxicated – and how much a load the person firing is carrying. Whether a person is wearing a vacc suit or battledress or is involved in some type of combat fall into this category as well. Some of these DMs are cumulative; some are not. For example, losses of one-half ST, DX and END are cumulative. A character with less than half of each of these would suffer a total DM of -4. The -4 DM for ¾ DX loss would supercede the -2 for ½ DX loss. The character would receive an additional -1 DM for having been wounded the previous round. It's not easy to fire accurately when wounded!

For the exact modifiers used in each case, refer to the *Combat Modifiers Table*. As noted above, I've incorporated all the DMs from the various *Traveller* books and supplements into my tables for convenience. Those DMs are marked in the table with asterisks (*).

### Automatic Hits

The roll of an unmodified 12 on two dice becomes an automatic hit regardless of the number actually required to hit. The to-hit number does, however, aid in determination of damage to the target, which may range from no hits (an insignificant flesh wound) to death, as follows:

If the number rolled on two dice needed to hit is 9 or less, the roll of an unmodified 12 is an automatic hit which does *double* the normal damage as rolled up for the particular weapon being used. For example, a 12 is rolled when firing at a target with a laser carbine. Roll four dice damage as normal. If the roll is a 13, the target takes 26 hits. If the doubled roll itself does not kill the target, roll one die. On a roll of 1 or 2, a vital spot has been hit (heart, brain, etc.) and the target dies.

If the number needed to hit is from 10 to 14, an unmodified roll of 12 is an automatic hit which does the regular amount of damage for that weapon. If the damage done by that particular weapon is not enough to kill the target, roll one die. On a roll of 1, a vital spot has been hit and the target dies.

If the number needed to hit is from 15 to 21, the roll of a 12 equals an automatic hit which does only *half* damage. Roll damage normally and divide it by two, rounding fractions down. If the result is less than one, it is a scratch and the target takes no damage.

If the number needed to hit is 22+ (not possible in most cases unless using the modifiers listed in this article), a roll of 12 is an automatic hit causing a maximum

**Roll of 12**

| To Hit | Result | Vital Hit |
|---|---|---|
| 9- | automatic hit, double damage | 1,2 |
| 10-14 | automatic hit, regular damage | 1 |
| 15-21 | automatic hit, half damage | NA |
| 22+ | automatic hit, 1-3=1 pt. damage, 4-6=0 damage | NA |

**Roll of 2**

| To Hit | Result | Jams |
|---|---|---|
| 1- | automatic miss, may jam | 1-3 |
| 2-7 | automatic miss, may jam | 1-4 |
| 8-12 | automatic miss, automatic jam | NA |
| 13+ | automatic miss, automatic jam, may explode | NA |

| Skill | Unjamming Procedure Result |
|---|---|
| No skill | Cannot unjam |
| Level 1 | Will take 2D6 rounds to unjam weapon, twice that if evading |
| Level 2 | Will take 1D6 rounds to unjam weapon, twice that if evading |
| Level 3+ | Will take one round to unjam weapon, two rounds if evading |

**TRAVELLER COMBAT MODIFIERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Modifiers of Movement** | |
| * Target evading – close, short range | -1 |
| medium range | -2 |
| long range | -3 |
| Firer evading | Same modifiers for target evading |
| * Target sneaking (moving cautiously, making use of cover, etc.) | -3 |
| Target or firer walking | -1 (Cumulative; i.e., -2 if both walking.) |
| Target or firer trotting or jogging | -2 (Cumulative) |
| Target or firer running | -3 (Cumulative) |
| Target flying slowly (wings, air/raft, grav belt, etc.) | -2 |
| Firer flying slowly, no maneuvers (as above) | -2 (Cumulative) |
| Target or firer flying fast, no maneuvers (as above) | -4 (Cumulative) |
| Firing from slow-moving vehicle | -3 |
| Target in slow-moving vehicle | -2 |
| Firing from fast-moving vehicle | -5 |
| Target in fast-moving vehicle | -4 |
| Target or firer opening range | -1 |
| Target or firer closing range | +1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Modifiers of Situation** | |
| * Firing at extreme range | -4 (+ modifiers for very long range.) |
| Target under cover, mostly exposed | -1 |
| Target under cover, partially exposed | -2 |
| * Target under cover, mostly unexposed | -3 |
| Target under cover, totally unexposed | Can't hit unless damage rating of cover is surpassed. |
| Uncertain footing | -3 (May require DX throw to retain footing.) |
| Firing at point-blank range | +5 (Must be within 1' of target.) |
| Target prone | -3 |
| Firer prone (and aiming) | +3 (See aimed shot.) |
| Firer prone (not aiming) | +1 |
| Target at higher altitude than firer | -1 |
| Target at lower altitude than firer | +1 |
| Target under soft cover (bushes, smoke, etc.) | -1 |
| Firing gun from rest, comfortable position (in foxhole, sitting, etc.) | +3 |
| Firing gun from rest, awkward position (kneeling, scrunched up, etc.) | +2 |
| Firing while upside down | -1 |
| **Modifiers of Action** | |
| * Draw and fire weapon in same round | -3 |
| * Fire shotgun against flying target | +2 |
| * Panic Fire | -2 |
| * Snapshot | -2 |
| * Cover fire | -1 |
| Turning or swinging to fire at target at side | -2 (Counts as snapshot.) |
| Turning or swinging to fire at target at rear | -4 |
| Firing while dropping from one level to the next | -4 (Must throw DX or less, otherwise lose footing and can't fire.) |
| Firing shoulder weapon one-handed | -3 (Unless DX 13+, then only -1.) |
| Firing hand weapon with wrong hand | -2 (Unless ambidextrous.) |
| Aimed shot | +2 (Must have spent one round aiming.) |
| Firing at stationary target, already hit in previous round | +2 |

of *one* point damage. Roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, the target takes 1 hit. On a 4-6 the target receives only a scratch, no damage.

Note that the roll to hit a vital spot causing the death of the target only applies to *living* beings. If the target is a robot, a vehicle or anything else that is not alive, the roll for death is not made. Similarly, if the damage roll has resulted in the target receiving only a scratch (i.e., less than one point of damage), the roll for a vital hit is not made either. Example: A target is hit with a body pistol which does 3D-8 damage. The number needed to hit was a 6. The roll was a 12 – double damage. A four is rolled on three dice. Even doubling the roll results in only 8 points. The target therefore receives no damage, so the roll for a vital hit is not made.

### Automatic Misses

The roll of an unmodified 2 on two dice becomes an automatic miss regardless of the number needed to hit. The to-hit number does, however, determine what the consequences, if any, are to the weapon and/or the character firing it, as follows:

If the number needed to hit on two dice is 1 or less, the roll of an unmodified 2 is an automatic miss. Roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, the weapon has jammed and may not be fired again until unjammed. On a roll of 4-6, the weapon may be fired normally next round.

If the number needed to hit is from 2 to 7, an unmodified roll of 2 is an automatic miss. On a further roll of 1-4 on one die, the weapon jams. Any other result allows the weapon to fire normally next round.

If the number needed to hit is from 8 to 12, a roll of 2 unmodified is an automatic miss and the weapon *always* jams. It may not be fired again during the present combat sequence until unjammed.

If the number needed to hit is 13+ (i.e., an unmodified roll of 12 is necessary so as to achieve an automatic hit), the roll of a 2 is an automatic miss and the weapon is jammed to such an extent it cannot be unjammed at all during the present combat sequence. It will require a person with either electronic or mechanical skill (depending on the weapon) 1D6 hours (minus skill level) to repair the weapon. Furthermore, a second roll must be made immediately upon rolling the 2 on the to-hit roll. This is a one die roll. If a 6 is rolled, rather than jamming, the weapon explodes doing *one-half* its regular damage to the holder. The weapon cannot be repaired and is useless.

The procedure for unjamming a weapon during the combat sequence is as follows: If the character has no skill in the weapon which has jammed, he cannot unjam it at all within the combat sequence. A character with a skill level of 1 in a weapon which has jammed may unjam it in 2D6 combat rounds. A character with a skill level of 2 in the weapon may unjam it in 1D6 combat rounds. If evading, the number of rounds required to unjam the weapon is doubled for skill levels 1 and 2. If a character has a skill level of 3+ in the

| | |
|---|---|
| Fire at specific body part (i.e., heart, head) | -4 |
| * Using telescopic sight | +4 (At long and very long ranges only.) |
| * Firing weapon with folding shoulder stock, folded | -1 |
| * Firing pistol weapon with attached shoulder stock – close and short range | -1 |
| medium and long range | +1 |
| Firing while dropping to prone, etc. | -3 |
| Firing while performing acrobatics | -3 |
| * Throw grenade more than 15 meters | -1/each additional 15 meters |
| Firing bipod weapon (LMG, etc.) without bipod | -1 (Autorifles excepted.) |
| Firing tripod weapon without tripod | -3 (Check for encumbrance also.) |
| Using psionics to help target weapon | +2 (Depends on the situation.) |
| Firing same round as teleported | -2 (Additional -4 if disoriented.) |

**Modifiers of Environment**

| | |
|---|---|
| Firing in darkness without IR or light intensifier goggles, etc. | -4 (*If target at close range, -1.) |
| Firing in dim or twilight (without aids) | -2 (No modifier if target at close range.) |
| Firing in rain, snow, etc. | -2 |
| Firing in heavy rain, snow, etc. | -3 |
| Firing in medium winds | -1 |
| Firing in strong winds | -2 |
| Firing in storm winds | -4 |
| Firing in hurricane, tornado, etc. | -5 |
| Firing in zero-G, no skill | -2 |
| * Firing in zero-G using handhold | -1 (+ appropriate DM if two-handed weapon.) |
| Firing under water (firer or target) | -3 (If *both* under water, only -1.) |
| Firing in dense, exotic or worse atmosphere | -1 (+ modifier for weather conditions.) |
| Firing in gravities 2Gs or higher | -2 |
| * Firing in vacuum | Use DM for short or medium range, whichever is more favorable. |
| Firing in familiar environment (planetary stats of diameter, atmosphere same or within 1 factor of home world *or* world where trained) | +1 (May also negate certain negative modifiers above.) |

**Modifiers of Condition**

| | |
|---|---|
| * No skill in weapon (NPCs and certain character types only) | -5 |
| Target ½ human size or smaller | -2 |
| Target twice human size or larger | +2 |
| Target vehicle size or larger | +4 |
| Firer under heavy fire | -2 |
| Firer involved in melee, hand-to-hand | -3 |
| * Firing while in vacc suit, no skill | -2 |
| Firing while fatigued (More than 18 hours without sleep; must sleep at least 6 hours undisturbed to eliminate initial -DM) | -3 (Additional -1 each extra hour without sleep, rest or stimulants.) |
| Firing while under stimulants | -1 |
| Firing while under heavy medication, drugs | -3 (-5 if drug a hallucinogen.) |
| Firing while mildly intoxicated | -2 (EN of 13+, -1.) |
| Firing while heavily intoxicated | -4 (EN of 14+, -2.) |
| Firing while seriously ill | -4 |
| Lost more than ½ DX | -2 (Cumulative) |
| Lost more than ½ ST | -1 (Cumulative) |
| Lost more than ½ EN | -1 (Cumulative) |
| Lost more than ¾ DX | -4 (Cumulative) |
| Lost more than ¾ ST | -2 (Cumulative) |
| Lost more than ¾ EN | -2 (Cumulative) |
| Carrying maximum load (within ½ kg) | -1 |
| Encumbered up to ½ encumbrance | -2 |
| Encumbered from ½ to full encumbrance | -3 |
| Carrying more than twice maximum load | -4 (Military personnel only – anyone else cannot fire.) |
| Wounded last round | -1 (The effects of shock.) |
| Hand (or arm) firing with wound | -2 (If using specific hit locations.) |
| Wearing powered battledress | +2 (Not applicable to systems for which battledress is required.) |

weapon jammed, it will only take him one round to unjam it, two if evading.

Note: The concept of automatic misses may be applied to blade and brawling weapons as well. Simply count a jam, should it occur, as a broken weapon. If the weapon is a bow, the string has broken. Unfortunately, a broken cutlass cannot be unjammed. Such a weapon may be used only as a club; a second broken result renders the weapon totally useless.

**Firearms in Contact with Target**

The final question which this article will address is: "What if I have my shotgun stuck right in his gut and pull the trigger?" According to any strict interpretation of the *Traveller* combat system, this would count as a shot at close range and in the case of most long firearms (non-pistols) would probably result in a miss. Unrealistic? Of course. And players have every right to complain about a strict adherence to such an interpretation. To somewhat alleviate such situations, I've added the point-blank range modifier to my DM tables. But for the even closer "gun-to-gut" encounters, I use the following procedure:

If a character's weapon is in contact with its target, the target having been stationary when the weapon was placed into contact, the result of a shot is an automatic hit which will do one *extra* die of damage to the target than the weapon normally inflicts. However, unless the target was taken *completely* by surprise (from behind, while asleep, unconscious or tied up) when fired upon, he may attempt to roll one-half his current DX or less on 2D6. If he succeeds, the shot is resolved as if at point-blank range, target evading. Damage is rolled normally if a hit occurs.

Thus are my additions to the *Traveller* combat system. May they help your sessions as they have mine. It should be noted again, especially concerning the combat modifiers, that these rules were devised with *Mercenary*-type characters and weaponry in mind. While the automatic hits and misses and other rules may work well even with Book One situations, it would probably be best to limit most of the DMs listed for those good ol' *Mercenary* free for alls, or those situations where Book One characters have gotten hold of such heavy weaponry. And while I've tried to cover nearly every situation I could imagine under which combat could occur in the most appropriate manner I could, I'm sure some will want to alter some of my DMs and will manage to think up others I've overlooked. Feel free. Half the fun in any role-playing game is adding your own twists.


# TSG BACK ISSUES

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, Runequest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 32. Traveller issue: Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina; "Minus Two Reaction;" software survey update; Yaquinto Games report; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 33. Play-by-mail issue: Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue: Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 35. The 1980 Game Survey; Solitaire Ogre; Notes for Novice DMs; The War of the Worlds featured; Insane Variants on Stomp!; Character Contest results; More Psionics for Traveller; Game Design Part IX; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 36. Computing damage in Star Fleet Battles; The Fire Web, Artifact for Traveller; a Featured Review of Akalabeth; Eon Products Company Report; The Ten Deadly Sins of Computer Game Programming; Computer Graphics contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 37. Gaming the Alien; Hyborean Risk; Improved Mission Resolution for Freedom in the Galaxy; Troubles in Valetia; Cosmic Encounter Review; FGU Company Report; Winners of the Weapons Contest; Ten Deadly Sins Part II; and 6 pages of reviews.

No. 38. 1980 Game Survey Results; Designer Notes for The Lords of UnderEarth; Used ships for Traveller; Selling Your Game Article; Expert D&D and Time War reviewed; Combination Game Contest; The Complaints Department; and 7 pages of reviews.

No. 39. Computer issue: Designer's Notes on Akalabeth, Strategic Simulations Report, Strategy in the Warp Factor, Computers to Go, a TRS-80 Briefing, An update on the gaming world; also Rumor Reliability in Traveller; Scenario for Triplanetary; Magic contest results; Simple Traps; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 40. Traveller issue: Planet of Adventure: Tschai, a new Traveller combat system, Non-Human Races contest winners, Aboard the Leviathan; also Cumulative Index to Game Articles; Game Design: RPGs; Deus Ex Machina; and 6 pages of reviews.

No. 41. D&D issue: Tips for Thieves, Alternate Races for D&D, DM Don'ts, (Your Name) and the Holy Grail; also Tips for TFT Players; more Non-humans contest winners; Game Design (last of the series); Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 42. Star Trek issue: Designer's Notes, Official Errata, Star Fleet Battle Manual reviewed, programming dialog in Trek computer games; also Metamorphosis Alpha Notebook; glossary of game terms – and what they really mean; combined arms in D&D; more non-human races; GEV contest winners; and 8 pages of reviews.

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# Origins Report

The Origins Awards for 1980 were presented at Pacific Origins, July 3, 1981. (The Academy of Adventure Arts & Design was formed in 1981 to conduct the final voting on the Origins Awards, so that the Awards could be ready by the time of the Origins convention and so that various abuses of voting during the convention could be avoided. Membership information for the Academy can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Academy, P.O. Box 656 Wynadotte, MI 48192.) The nominees and winners are as follows:

**The H.G. Wells Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Miniatures and Role-Playing**

*Best Historical Figure Series, 1980:* RAL PARTHA CONDOTTIERI; also nominated were: Heritage Napoleonics, Hinchliffe Seven Years War, Mike's Models' Ancients, and Minifigs 15mm Napoleonics.

*Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Figure Series, 1980:* RAL PARTHA PERSONALITIES; other nominees were: Grenadier's AD&D, Heritage Knights & Magick, Martian Metals Traveller, and Minifigs World of Greyhawk.

*Best Vehicular Model Series, 1980:* GHQ MICRO ARMOR; also named were: CinC 1/285 armor, Heritage Panzertroops, Martian Metals Ogre series, and Superior Models' MAATAC.

*Best Miniatures Rules, 1980:* TACFORCE (GDW), winning out over Engage & Destroy (Chaosium), Knights & Magick (Heritage), Sea Command (Enola), and WRG Ancients 6th Ed.

*Best Role-Playing Rules, 1980:* DRAGONQUEST (SPI); its competition was: In The Labyrinth (Metagaming), Land of the Rising Sun (FGU), Space Opera (FGU), and Top Secret (TSR).

*Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1980:* TWILIGHTS PEAK (GDW); others nominated were: Duck Tower (Judges Guild), Expedition to the Barrier Peaks (TSR), Keep on the Borderlands (TSR), and Queen of the Demonweb Pits (TSR).

*Best Professional Magazine Covering Miniatures, 1980:* THE COURIER, which bested Campaign, Dragon, Gryphon, Military Modeling, and Wargamer's Digest.

*Best Professional Magazine Covering Role-Playing, 1980:* JOURNAL OF THE TRAVELLERS AID SOCIETY, winning out over Different Worlds, Dragon, The Space Gamer, and White Dwarf.

*All Time Best Pre-Napoleonic Gunpowder Miniatures Rules:* WRG RENAISSANCE RULES; others named were: Cavaliers & Roundheads, Field Regulations (both TSR), Frederick the Great (FGU) and The Wargame (Charles Grant).

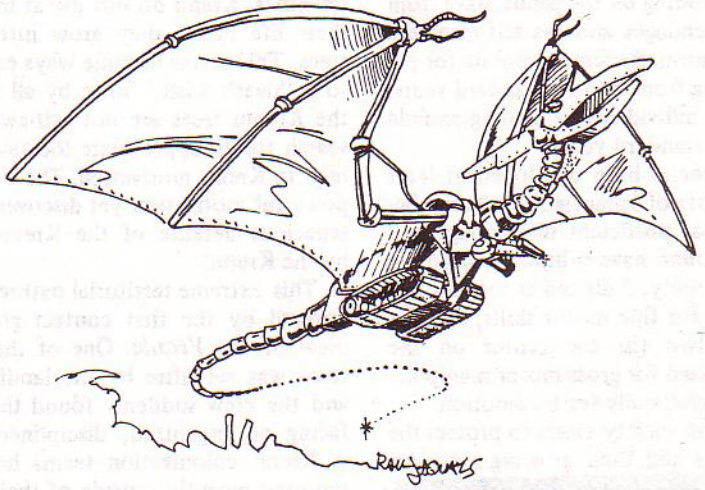
*All Time Best Air Combat Miniatures Rules:* BASIC/ADVANCED FIGHTER COMBAT (Zocchi), winning over Air Power (TSR), and Figher Pilot (Zocchi).

*Best Professional Magazine Covering Boardgames, 1980:* FIRE & MOVEMENT; others named were: Ares, The General, Moves, and Strategy & Tactics.

*Best Amateur Magazine Covering the Hobby in General:* HMS REVIEW, winning over Airdrome, Combat Zone, Alarums & Excursions, and Journal of WWII Wargaming.

*Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame Membership:* E. GARY GYGAX.

*Special Combined H.G. Wells and Charles Roberts Award for the Gamer's Choice of 1980:* ACE OF ACES (Nova).



**The Charles Roberts Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Boardgaming**

*Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1980:* EMPIRES OF THE MIDDLE AGES (SPI), winning over Circus Maximus (AH), Knights of Camelot (TSR), Pea Ridge (SPI), and War & Peace (AH).

*Best 20th Century Boardgame, 1980:* CRESCENDO OF DOOM (AH); also running were: Berlin 85 (SPI), 5th Corps (SPI), Fortress Europa (AH) and Kursk (SPI).

*Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame, 1980:* AZHANTI HIGH LIGHTNING (GDW); others were: Asteroid (GDW), Dark Nebula (GDW), Knights of Camelot (TSR), and Time Tripper (SPI).

*Best Computer Game, 1980:* TEMPLE OF APSHAI (Automated Simulations), which went up against four Avalon Hill titles: B-1 Nuclear Bomber, Midway Campaign, North Atlantic Convoy Raider, and Nukewar.

*Best Initial Release of a Boardgame, 1980:* STREETS OF STALINGRAD (Phoenix), winning over Alaric the Goth (SSG), Raid on Iran (Steve Jackson), Titan (Gorgonstar), and Winter Storm (Vanguard).

**Origins Releases**

New releases at Origins included two science fiction role-playing games. SPI introduced their new *Universe* (to be reviewed next issue). Lou Zocchi brought out a new edition of his venerable *Star Patrol.*

Heritage released four small-format games, the first of their projected line of "Dwarfstar" games. These are packaged in 4" x 7" cardboard boxes, with color maps and counters. Titles are *Star Viking, Demonlord, Barbarian Prince,* and *Outpost Gamma.*

Chaosium announced that their magazine *Different Worlds* would be going monthly.

Also new at Origins: the first issue of ex-*Dragon* editor Tim Kask's new magazine, to be titled *Adventure Gaming.*

Fantasy Games Unlimited will be going into the miniatures business, producing figures for its *Space Opera* game. T-Rex Miniatures will continue to do the vehicles; FGU will do other figures.

# Nonhuman Races

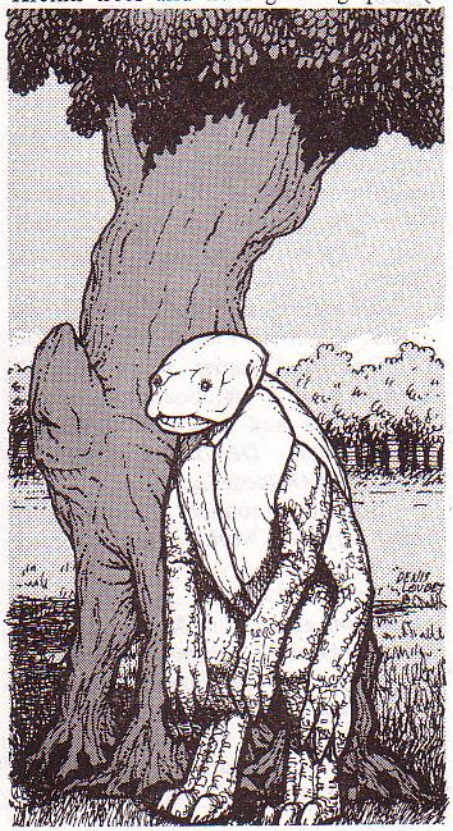
### The Krenn

The planet Combe is primarily noteworthy because of the unique phylum, *Cloromorphus*, which originated there. These are large (80 to 150 meters at full growth) tree-like plants that propagate by "seeds" which are not only mobile, but intelligent.

The adult plant shows no signs of intelligence, but at maturity produces "seeds" which, depending on the genus, have from 4 to 8 appendages and are self directed. The seeds normally remain mobile for periods ranging from 2 to 35 standard years, with some individuals remaining mobile for over 50 standard years.

Three species have developed at least the rudiments of language, the Krenn being the most proficient in language and tool use. Krenn have 6 limbs, 2 used for locomotion only, 2 digited at the end and used solely for fine motor skills, and the remaining two (in the center on the trunk) are used for gross motor manipulation and occasionally for locomotion.

The Krenn society exists to protect the Krenni trees and their growing space (as well as several symbiotic species). They educate the newly released seeds (Krendor) in tool use, language, and duty to the forest.



In times of poor growth many of the Krenn will migrate to other areas. This pressure for new growing areas has led to the spread of the Krenni forests to the three neighboring planetary systems.

The psychology of the Krenn has attracted some discussion among human scientists. Krenn do not die at the end of their life cycle; they grow into Krenni trees. This seems in some ways equivalent to a "death wish," since by all accounts the Krenni trees are not self-aware! The search for an appropriate location is very high in Krenn motivation. The only more powerful motivation yet discovered is the tenacious defense of the Krenni forests by the Krenn.

This extreme territorial nature was discovered by the first contact group, the crew of the *Vistula*. One of the Krenni trees was set afire by the landing boat, and the crew suddenly found themselves facing an organized, disciplined attack.

Krenn colonization teams have been reported recently outside of their normal cluster and some military and scientific sources suggest that they plan to establish Krenni forests on less developed planets, eventually displacing the currently dominant life forms.

*– John L. Vogel*

### The Crell

Designed specifically for *Space Opera*, the Crell are the major power found in both the Libra and Virgo constellations. The empire is over 400,000 light years from end to end, and contains 2,195 known systems to date.

The Crell are most feared for their large roving fleets of battleplanets and starhunters. The battleplanets are similar in design to the Death Star of *Star Wars* fame. The number of battleplanets encountered will not be less than two, and not less than four if an invasion fleet is encountered. Starhunters are up-gunned cruisers designed for long range fleet action and are often encountered in small fleets of one to six. A fleet will also have one to six agroships per battleplanet, besides one to twenty starhunters.

The Crell are a race of ursinoids originating from three Class G solar systems located in the Votre II sector in the Libra constellation. The race is Tech 10 and is as old as the last remnants of the forerunners. Despite the military city-state appearance, the Crell are a semi-democratic open-structured society. Their social morals are similar to Terrans, leaning towards a more destructive mentality. Despite this the Crell are slightly conditioned to believe that the empire's interests come first. As would be expected, at least 80% of the population has to have at least four tours of military service (eight years), including females. Due to such a large number of the populace being in the military, robots and conditioned slaves are necessary to perform some, if not all, of the hard labor tasks.

The economy is based on legal tender called a platinum "lubal," with gold being the most valuable metal. The economy of the four home worlds is that of a rich industrial planet with populations running around 25,000,000,000. It is due to this that conquering of other worlds is necessary to obtain natural resources and pro-

vide colonies to "keep the wheels turning." The colonies are most important as the Crell reproduce like rabbits.

Socially, the male is the dominant member, although the female is expected to perform certain tasks normally related to the males. The ursinoids themselves appear as heavily proportioned humanoids with hair. They still retain the claws of their ancestors and the brown, black, or white fur also. Males range from 180 cm to 225 cm in height and mass of 100 kg to 220 kg. Females are somewhat smaller than the males, but are still large in proportion to human males. Vision and hearing are similar to human norms. Smell on the other hand is very acute, almost approaching that of a canine. Ursinoids are vegetarians, consuming meat on occasion. They have iron-based metabolisms and life expectancy is about 100 years.

*Standard Crell Trooper*

*Uniform:* CBA with jet black appearance and golden helmet with silver eagle and large tinted visor. Rank is given in a series of red and green strips on helmet backs. Back packs and belts also black.

*Armor:* CBA/5E with helmet and belt screen (sealed).

*Armament:* AMG 10 with type G over/under grenade pistol, targetscope and bayonet, force blade, blast pistol. If in vacuum conditions, substitute blast rifle for AMG 10.

*Other Gear:* backpack
two weeks field rations
sleeping bag
water dispenser
three weeks emergency concentrated rations
PC/5 side communicator
300 10mm rounds
personal medipack
polarized visors
two magnesium flares
electric torch
40 water proof matches
2 photon grenade torpedoes
4 fragmentation grenade torpedoes
2 incendiary grenade torpedoes
2 frag demo grenades

*Squad:* 4 troopers, 1 cap troopers.

*Section:* 2 squads.

*Platoon:* 3 sections + 3 corporals + 1 sergeant.

Special patrols or troops participating in large scale combat will probably have contra grav harness or jump pack.

*Support Weapons*

*Squad:* blast LMG and lanze.

*Section:* gauss rifle and 2 apro carbines.

*Platoon:* 2 dally guns and 2 tangle rifles

This will be the standard gear of troopers involved in small scale action. If involved in large scale battle or invasion force 80% will be in vehicles or PAPA armor but with same weapons. The other 20% will be unnecessary personnel, techs, and men in rear area positions (artillery).

*Attributes:* all 11 + 1d6

As the Crell are a Tech 10 civilization, the majority of the industry production is devoted towards the manufacturing of more powerful weapons.

The Crell will accept certain canines and felines into their ranks only if they are loyal to the cause. Such races often make up their own divisions and are often used in semi-suicidal and suicidal missions. Sometimes, the Crell conquer such races and make them into puppet city-states of the empire for as long as the Crell need them. Human or demi-human races will either be controlled or enslaved. Any saurian or other lizard races will be immediately put to death by whatever means feasible, as reptiles are extremely disliked.

The Crell will make military alliances with Mertuns and Bug races of high tech levels, only for the purpose of furthering military advances.

Sports and the arts are much appreciated by the Crell people even though the military goals come first. The dark side of the force is practiced in the empire, along with telekinesis, and thus psionics are not uncommon among some officers of high rank.

*– Randy Chafe*


# SPACE OPERA

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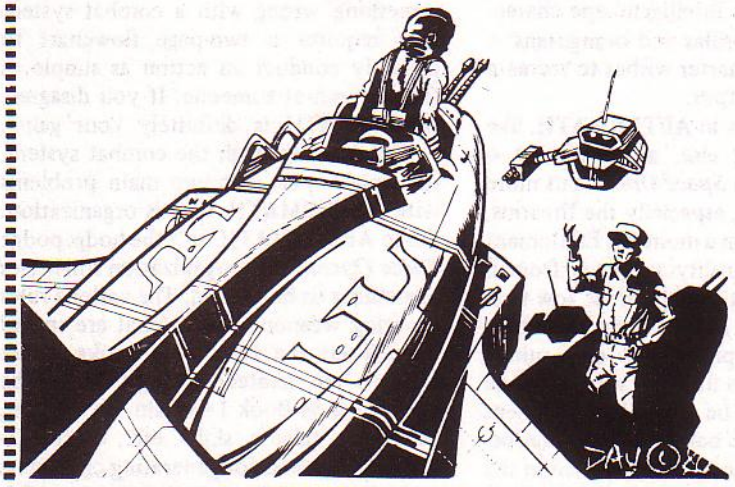

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# FEATURED REVIEW:

# Aftermath

## by William A. Barton

AFTERMATH is Fantasy Games Unlimited's entry into the growing subgenre of After-the-Holocaust SF RPGs, which includes Timeline's *Morrow Project*, TSR's *Gamma World* and that ludicrous abomination, *The Realm of Yolmi*. The basic set consists of three rule books, an introductory scenario, a cardstock character sheet and a three-sheet fold-out set of cardstock charts that could be used as a ref shield, boxed. The game includes 223 pages of rules – more than the three previous games combined, and more than 40 pages longer than even FGU's *Space Opera*!

AFTERMATH is a very complex game system. More than a role-playing *game*, it is a role-playing *simulation*, perhaps more so than any other RPG to date. AFTERMATH designers Paul Hume and Bob Charrette seem to have sat down with the idea of covering nearly every possible situation they could think of that might come up in a world in which civilization has crumbled, then to create a system that would cover it. They've darn near succeeded, too. The designer's notes say that AFTERMATH was more than two years in the making; I can well believe it. The game was originally to be released by Phoenix Games, then was bought by FGU when Phoenix apparently went under (the FGU label on the cover of the box is a sticker; I would assume this is to cover the Phoenix logo), yet if I didn't know better I'd have sworn that it was designed from the start with FGU's penchant for complexity in mind.

Among the various details covered in AFTERMATH are the complexities of riding horses, splash effects of thrown acid, various types of poisons and gases and their effects, the shades of difference between a certain skill used in an urban environment – and dozens of other minutiae that most systems either leave to the gamemaster to devise or handle briefly with a few guidelines. Whereas *Gamma World* handles poisons and the characters' resistance to them in a single chart, AFTERMATH goes into such subtleties as the poison's vector (aerosol, subcutaneous, gastric or dermal), its "incubation period," its strength and type (lethal, narcotic or depressant), its cycle time, crisis and side effects, even a formula for "encoding" poisons. The diseases of biowarfare are covered in even greater detail than in *The Morrow Project*, as is the development and use of psionic powers among the survivors – a subject TMP failed to cover properly.

AFTERMATH does miss a few bases in its quest for completeness – weather isn't covered at all except under phenomena on the encounter tables, computer technology is slighted somewhat, as is the construction and handling of conventional robots – but it doesn't miss many. It may not have the exhaustive lists of animals and mutants of TMP or GW, but it does include some animals usually not found outside FRPGs – elephants, rhinos, giant cockroaches and even sharks! The only mutant animal listed as a "regular" in AFTERMATH is the Master Rat, an intelligent rodent that may eventually rival man for the remnants of Earth, as in Andre Norton's *Star Man's Son*. There's even a section on intelligent ape characters – chimps, gorillas and orangutans – in case the gamemaster wishes to recreate the *Planet of the Apes*.

Equipment lists in AFTERMATH, like nearly everything else, are extensive – not so much as in *Space Opera*, but more so than even TMP, especially the firearms, which I'll discuss in a moment. Equipment is grouped into utility numbers from 0 (signifying low utility, poor or low-tech equipment) to 5 (high utility, high-tech items). For example, a club or a ruined musket would be a utility 1 weapon while a laser rifle would be utility 5. Equipment is also rated by its barter value, barter being the only economic system used in the game.

Those who thought the weapons list overly long and detailed and the combat system complicated in *The Morrow Project* should take a look at AFTERMATH. The section on firearms and explosives alone is 26 pages long – and that's not counting the section on muscle-powered and hand-to-hand weapons, including weapons usually relegated to fantasy games, such as blowguns, shuriken and nunchaku, and the section on lasers, nukes, flamethrowers and other exotics. In addition, there is a list of almost *200* different firearms in the back, in case players want to use even more detail. Pages and pages of the three rule books are devoted to such details as types of magazines, ammo, grenades, etc.; black powder "cook-offs"; armor penetration values; gas and burn effects; methods of reloading weapons; blast patterns for grenades, claymore mines, shotguns, etc.; hip fire, recoil, laser trauma – you name it, it can be found somewhere in AFTERMATH.

Most of the basic combat rules are located in Book 1, along with the explanations of "detailed action time" (one of five time scales used in AFTERMATH), in which combat occurs, and rules for movement and action performance, both of which are required prerequisites to understanding combat. These rules cover the likes of hit locations for bipeds *and* quadrupeds; various types of damage possible (lethal, subdual, crushing or combination); critical hits and misses; combat on a moving vehicle, on horseback or in water; and other basics that the later rules build upon. Examples are given of how characters may face opponents on the time display, how they can use skills and/or raw talents to increase their chances to hit or miss a target, how armor works – believe me, there's a lot here! And it's *all* detailed. There's even a two-page "combat procedure flowchart" in the basic rules book! Now, personally, I think there has to be something wrong with a combat system that requires a two-page flowchart to properly conduct an action as simple as firing a gun at someone. If you disagree, AFTERMATH is definitely your game.

Checking through the combat system, one might pick out two main problems with AFTERMATH. One is organization. While AFTERMATH isn't the hodgepodge *Space Opera* is, the organization still leaves something to be desired. The various rules covering weapons and combat are spread throughout the three rule books. Other subjects are treated similarly. While the basic rules in Book 1 explain the abilities, attributes, talents, skills, etc., of characters, the method for generating characters isn't given until Book 2. As a result, to ful-

ly understand how to create an AFTERMATH character requires leafing back and forth constantly from one book to the next. A lot of information that players might need to know in a game is placed in the "forbidden-to-players" gamemaster's guide. A player with a skill in laser technology, for example, will be able to learn what his character would know only by reading the GM guide, unless the GM gives him the information. In several places, too, terms and abbreviations are used quite freely pages before they are even explained.

This ties in with AFTERMATH's second flaw: its *excessive* detail, calculations and abbreviations. In several places I had to read and reread a section to figure out exactly what was meant – and then only managed by reading an example. Without the examples, much of the basic rules sections might as well be written in Swahili.

The rules lack clarity in places and will take work to understand fully. The authors seem to be particularly enchanted with initials, too. Characters have BCSs, DRTs, CDAs and BMAs, make ASTs and CSTs, use weapons with BDGs or WDMs, all the while moving in DAT! Trying to keep track of what all of them stand for is enough to make one feel DOA. Overall, I'd recommend you find a detail-minded GM who has spent a *lot* of time learning the rules so he can teach them to you – or at least help you understand them.

In spite of its excessive complexity, AFTERMATH has its admirable points. Aside from the long lists of equipment and weapons, the skills are quite diverse and include such uncommon but useful ones as Architecture, Tailor, Farming and Culture, as well as the obligatory combat and technology skills. One might note, too, that AFTERMATH is the first game of its kind to provide skills for characters at all.

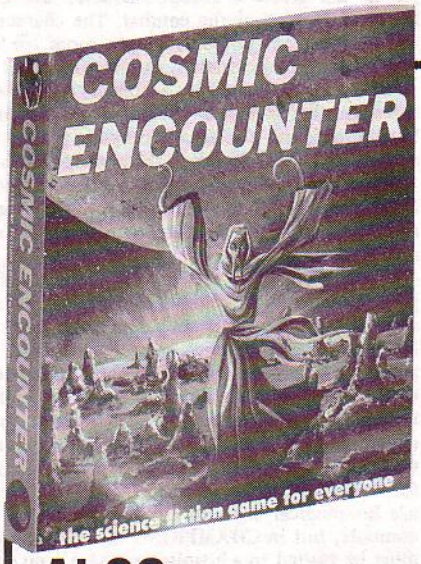
AFTERMATH's character generation is closer to that of *Superhero 2044* that anything else. Players are given 75 points to divide among six attributes: wit, will, strength, deftness, speed and health. Characters also have scores in seven talent areas, determined in part by the character's psychological profile (rolled for on one of AFTERMATH's many tables). The talent areas are charismatic, combative, communicative, esthetic, mechanical, natural and scientific. The attribute and talent scores will help a player choose skills for his character and will govern the character's initial score in each skill. Characters must also determine their age groups, origins, physical characteristics, encumbrance capacity, basic clothing, initial armor and equipment and choose their skills, among other things. It sounds like a lot to do – and it is – but if a player follows the example given, character generation will prove to be one of the easier aspects of the game. The only problem may come in determining encumbrance. The formula given in the rules and that in the example are contradictory. And neither formula gives the results used in the example to show the difference between unencumbered and partially encumbered. So until FGU issues errata, you'll have to use whichever formula you prefer.

The single aspect of AFTERMATH which may make it very attractive is the open-endedness of its background. Unlike TMP and *Gamma World*, the world in which AFTERMATH is played is entirely up to the GM. If you want a world ravaged by a nuclear war, so be it. If you prefer natural disaster, it's yours for the making. Your personal aftermath can be set 20 years or 200 years after the holocaust – whatever it may have been. Suggestions are given for certain methods of worldwide disaster to spark the GMs imagination: a new ice age, total or limited war, cometary collisions *a la Lucifer's Hammer*, Earth's slipping into another dimension where magic works and mythical beasts still live, alien invasions (one of the most interesting ideas in this line is that of H.G. Wells' Martians returning and *winning* this time).

It wouldn't be too difficult to integrate a *Morrow Project* scenario into an AFTERMATH campaign – or vice versa. And the Bul People campaign mentioned as a possibility is little more than a *Gamma World* scenario without the futuristic weapons and wild mutants. Thus, AFTERMATH could even be used as a sourcebook to fill out places where the rules of either of those two systems are a little sparse. This could perhaps be AFTERMATH's greatest attraction for those who enjoy role-playing *games* rather than role-playing *simulations*.

There's a lot more I could say about AFTERMATH, both negative and positive, but space restrictions forbid it. So I'll leave it at this: If your taste in RPGs tends toward simplicity or to systems that are easily playable without a *lot* of work, you'll surely want to pass up AFTERMATH, and stick to *Gamma World* or *The Morrow Project*. If you thrive on complexity, countless calculations and mounds of information, AFTERMATH will give you that – and more.

*AFTERMATH is designed by Paul Hume and Bob Charrette and is published by Fantasy Games Unlimited. It retails for $20.00, which includes the three rule books, introductory scenario with cut-out counters, charts, a questionnaire and game box. Published 1981.*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★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

ATTACK OF THE MUTANTS (Yaquinto); $2.00 or free with an order. One 11" x 17" sheet of light cardboard, including map, rules and counters. Two players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

This version of the game is evidently intended to introduce boardgames to people whose interest in such things has not gone beyond *Monopoly*. I had some difficulty following the rules on first reading. The game is so simple, though, that anyone can play, and no skill to speak of is involved. Mutants (some radioactive) invade a scientific establishment defended by robots and occupied by four humans who are trying to finish an experiment. There are 25 rooms, each one square. When opposing pieces occupy the same room, a die is rolled for each piece to determine if it destroys an opponent. After 10 turns, if the mutants have reached the center room they win; otherwise the humans escape in some unspecified manner, and win.

Considering how little skill is involved, the presentation seems unnecessarily complicated. For completists only.

*– Lewis Pulsipher*

CHAMPIONS (Hero Games, 702 Laurel Wood Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403); $9.95. Designed by George MacDonald and Steve Peterson. One 8½" x 11" rulebook. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

This is another in the ranks of superhero role-playing games. Players create, through point-allocation, the characters they want, and usually exceed their allotted points by picking up superheroic disadvantages.

More so than many role-playing games on the market, and certainly more so than *Villains & Vigilantes* or *Superhero 2044*, CHAMPIONS succeeds in what it is trying to do. The characters, assembled with their multifold powers and disadvantages, the combat, with its spectacular effects, and the sheer coherence and playability of the whole game system render this a very good game. After one reading of the rules, a player can create a decent character and will have a fair grasp of the combat. The character record sheet has not only ample room for all the noted characteristics, it also contains a chart to aid in determining secondary characteristics, another giving modifiers for various combat options, and also a half-complete picture of a character – simply ink in the appropriate costume motifs, color, and you have the character before you, in all his (or her) glory. (There are eight character record sheets, each with a different picture.)

There are a few nits to pick. A xeroxable judge's shield would have been nice; so would a page of character record sheets for normal NPCs and dependents. A sample adventure, to aid the prospective referee assemble future ones, would have been in keeping with the book's utility. There is nothing on "extracurricular" characteristics of the superheroes – there is no way to determine professional skills or wealth, for example. In the comics, Dr. Mid-Nite can use his medical skills to aid a badly wounded comrade, but in CHAMPIONS the injured soul must be rushed to a hospital, as there is no way for characters to be doctors. There is no way to see if the character is a playboy millionaire or a struggling science student. In short, within the scope of the rules, you can create Iron Man, but not Tony Stark, The Huntress but not Helena Wayne.

These flaws can be overcome with some thought and work, which leaves the buyer with a fine game. If the subject matter interests you, I'd wholeheartedly recommend this product.

*– Aaron Allston*

THE HAMMER OF THOR (Nova Game Designs); $18.95. Designed by Joe Angiolillo. Contains one 16" x 21" poster-like map, 16-page rulebook, 19 card decks (600+ cards) and two reference sheets. The current edition has a corrected map and an errata sheet. Two or more players; playing time 4 hours up. Published 1980.

The object of the game is to be victorious at Ragnarok, the final battle. Each player is designated good, evil, or neutral and then picks a figure from Norse mythology as his hero. Heroes roam about trying to get followers, find useful items and runes, and build up reputation points (given for killing enemies). When heroes run into some one – generally a random NPC – they have an encounter. Heroes can choose to fight, to make friends, or to seduce. Eventually the Ragnarok card turns up, whereupon good and evil line up for the final battle. The player on the victorious side of Ragnarok who has the most reputation points wins the game.

HAMMER is certainly complete. The 600+ cards include *every* mythical character (from Thor himself to Audhumla the Original Cow) plus every magical gadget or dwarvish artifact ever mentioned in legend. On top of this, HAMMER has enough components to be played by any number of players. Each player is on his own private quest, seldom running into other heroes. Players interact only when they run the random NPCs other players meet.

HAMMER's tragic flaw is its rules. I can't figure out weapon use – the rules seem to indicate that weapons can only be used by leaders, but only if they are attacking but not defending. In that case, this game has a lot of weapons that will never be used. Other rules are vague: do I lose control of a dead character? The errata sheet, trying to correct a question about how many followers a leader may have, only garbles the matter further. There are also minor quibbles about accuracy: The map doesn't match the myths, the fire giants have all but vanished, the valkyries won't obey Odin. There is too much paperwork. There is no explanatory material (who are the Alfar?). Lastly the game, with small armies and their heroes marching along, isn't much like Norse mythology (even with all the *completeness* of every character and item from legend, the truth is that you can't use any item the way it was used in the myths).

HAMMER OF THOR was a labor of love on the part of its designer. Too bad Nova didn't assign him a developer. The game is not playable as published, nor are any simple fixes going to help – I recommend HAMMER only to Norse mythology freaks who want to rewrite major sections of the rulebook.

*– W.G. Armintrout*

I.C.B.M. (Mayfair Games, Inc., P.O. Box 733, Chicago, IL 60625); $5.00. Designed by Neil Zimmerer. One 8-page rule booklet, 17" x 21" map, 108 die-cut counters, bagged. For two players; playing time 30-45 minutes. Published 1981.

For those *Ultimatum* enthusiasts who don't always have time for an all-out game of nuclear destruction and retaliation (or who just like to get down to the business of pushing the red button minus the niceties of negotiation, etc.), Mayfair Games offers I.C.B.M., one of the initial releases in its line of simple, quick-to-play simulations. I.C.B.M. is nuclear war stripped to the bare necessities – intercontinental nuclear missiles and ABMs. The map is a polar projection showing the U.S.S.R. and North America, with major cities and their values. The counters show various strength U.S. and Russian missiles on one side, mushroom clouds on the other. The rules are brief, easy-to-understand and clean. Everything that's needed for a half-hour final war – from first strike to massive retaliation – is here.

The graphics of I.C.B.M. are especially nice. The map is colorful yet not gaudy – more pleasing than many that come with lower-priced games such as this. The counters, while a bit thin, are quite sufficient, with remarkably few cutting errors – a problem usually found in products by even the biggest companies. The game is quick and simple to play; most games won't last much longer than the amount of time used to set up in the first place. Since missiles have a life of only four turns, it's conceivable most will either be on their way to the target or will have been knocked out by your opponent's early waves before the first wave's time is up. Great for breaks between long sessions of other games.

While the rules are generally clear, they are a bit sketchy in a couple spots; the charts printed on the game map aren't adequately explained, for example. This shouldn't bother experienced gamers, but it might be a problem for newcomers. The game's simplicity may cause old hands at this sort of game to tire of it after a few playings, too, unless they add their own variants to the optional rules mentioned at the end. In fact, I recommend that experienced gamers incorporate at least the rule on hidden ABMs as soon as they get the hang of the game. The rule that all missiles from one base must be launched at the same time or the remainder is lost is less than satisfying, but this is a picky complaint and the rule is easily changed.

Overall, though, I.C.B.M. is an impressive first offering for a new small company and a good beginning level simulation for those who like to reduce their opponents to so much nuclear dust.

– *William A. Barton*

THE SWORD AND THE STARS (SPI); $12.00. Designed by Eric Smith. Boxed, with 17" x 22" map, 24-page rulebook, 56 cards, 400 counters, dice. 1-5 players; playing time 2 hours up. Published 1981.

Based on the same system as SPI's successful *Empires of the Middle Ages*, this game portrays empire-building among the stars. Those who haven't seen *Empires* will be surprised to find that all of the counters in the game are game function markers, and that running one's own empire is as important as ruining the others. Play consists of a series of "operations" by which one expands or improves one's empire, or attacks another empire. In multiplayer scenarios, players may make or break deals, bribe each other, and even vote on the fate of a player. Unlike some such games, THE SWORD AND THE STARS contains rules about how to make deals, and what to do if they are broken, rather than just letting the players make use of their own personal pressures. Personal pressure, of course, remains as an element of the game.

Those who have seen *Empires* will find that THE SWORD AND THE STARS is almost but not quite congruent to the older game. The confederation, race, ideology, guardian webs, and tech level correspond to the church, religion, language, fortifications and social state. However, new features are included. Distance can affect one's ability to perform an operation, but stargates may be built to avoid such attenuation. More importantly, the players vote, during the last few turns, on whether to stop the game. This feature prevents a player from using the last turn to take far more territory than he can hold, or to break a deal without fear of the consequences.

I'd recommend THE SWORD AND THE STARS to any die-hard *Empires of the Middle Ages* player, to anybody who wants a less expensive alternative to that game, and to people who play SF but not historical games. The game system is great; only the historical appeal of the older game is lacking.

– *Brian McCue*

THIEVES' GUILD (Gamelords Ltd.); $9.95. Written by Richard Meyer and Kerry Lloyd. 120 page 8½" x 11" rulebook. Published 1980.

The thief has been the most neglected character type in fantasy role-playing games. Although D&D, for example, includes a thief class, the adventures toward which AD&D is geared are unsuitable for thievish abilities. One seldom encounters a gamesmaster who has arranged adventures specifically for thieves. The THIEVES' GUILD series provides information and scenarios for GMs who haven't had the time (or knowledge) to work up adventures for thieves only.

According to prefatory material, TG was computer-typeset and offset printed, but it looks like reduced dot matrix printed on a good mimeo – in other words, it's hard to read. The pages are punched with three holes to be stored in a binder, allowing material from TG II and III to be inserted in the proper places.

TG can be reviewed from two perspectives, first as a self-contained game, second as a supplement to popular role-playing games.

As a self-contained game, TG lacks many details (such as rules for magicians, though spells are included) and is unlikely to be intelligible to someone not familiar with wargames. The game owes more to D&D than to any other system, but there are quite a few changes: for ex-


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ample, a non-adventurer averages around 15 hits to kill. Only thief characters are fully described, including skills which may be learned (such as glassblowing) and some thiefly abilities additional to those of AD&D. GMs of other fantasy games might want to add some of these skills to their lists. The combat system is a sensible modification of the D&D style which eliminates combat tables.

Considering TG as a supplement, many sections of the rules can be applied directly to other games, such as the rules for ransom, disguise, "fences," and disposition of prisoners. The scenarios really are intended to be used with TG characters and rules; it's not disguised D&D. A method of converting characters from *D&D, C&S, RuneQuest,* and *T&T* to TG is provided. To use the scenarios without conversion of players the GM must, at least, make some changes in hit points of persons and divide the value of treasures by ten to get amounts reasonable for other games. The scenarios, which occupy about two-thirds of the book, include travellers for highwaymen to rob, two stores to burgle, and one group of couriers (in town) to waylay. There are no dungeons as such, but the burglary and courier scenarios include maps of buildings and of the surrounding streets and establishments.

As a separate game TG is reasonably interesting, but few veteran gamers will want to change from their own rules, and few novices would understand it. As a set of scenarios and rule suggestions, TG is better than much Judges Guild material, and even at $9.95 it offers as much for your dollar as the "official" modules published by the major companies, provided you are interested in thieves and you don't mind poor printing. In fact, if you like thieves, or want to give them more scope in your game, buy TG before you buy any other supplement.

*– Lewis Pulsipher*


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## SUPPLEMENTS

DARGON'S DUNGEON, 2nd Ed. (FBI); $5.95. Designed by Bill Hart and Michael Stackpole. Solo adventure for T&T. One 40-page booklet. One player; playing time 1 hour. Published 1981.

This is a remake of a solo dungeon published in 1977. Up to three humanoid characters are allowed, with combat adds totalling 90 or less. Magic is allowed: players are referred to a "magic matrix" (which is quickly becoming a standard feature of FBI solo dungeons).

The new edition has little in common with the old, and almost every change is an improvement. The adventure is far more complete, playable, and better-looking than before.

Alas, some problems remain. There are a number of irritating errors in the text. The balance is better than before, but some options still mean sudden death, and others would challenge far more powerful characters than the rules allow.

If you enjoy pointless solo dungeons, this is a fine one.

*– Forrest Johnson*

GRIMTOOTH'S TRAPS (FBI); $9.95. Edited by Paul Ryan O'Connor. Supplement to any FRPG. One 8½" x 11" 54-page booklet. Published 1981.

This is a malevolent collection of dungeon party-killers, evidently the best selections from numerous FBI contributors.

GRIMTOOTH'S is a marvel for the merciless GM. Presented are 101 traps – room, corridor, treasures, miscellaneous items, and the dread 101st Trap. Many traps are magical; most are mechanical, and really quite clever. A lot of experience went into this collection; if nothing else, this supplement shows that a lot of people out there really do like blood. Better than the *Handbook of Traps and Tricks* (reviewed this issue), GRIMTOOTH'S is cleanly and neatly presented, commendably concise, and even instructive.

It is also really deadly, which is its major drawback. Most of these traps are designed to kill; diversionary or confusing tricks are few. Some should be used only if the GM truly wants a detested party to end up as so much mash.

I'd recommend this as one of the best supplements released this year – but use it sparingly, unless you have several Indiana Joneses in the party.

*– Aaron Allston*

HANDBOOK OF TRAPS AND TRICKS (Dragon Tree); $9.50. Edited by Ben Ezzell. Supplement for many FRPGs. One 8½" x 5½" 100-page booklet. Published 1981.

As the title suggests, this is a compendium of mostly dungeon-style traps – trapped passageways, stairs, rooms, hallucinogens, portcullises, and so on, magical or mechanical or both.

It's a pretty good selection. Traps vary from the annoying to the horrifying, and any GM can find useful items here. A GM using too many of these in one sitting will probably end up with a party of frustrated and bored adventurers, however.

But – $9.50? Even for this packed selection of confounding tricks, $9.50 is too high a price (unless you're a wealthy gamer – a mythological creature). I really cannot justify purchasing this package at this price.

A good supplement – but wait for the price to go down.

*– Aaron Allston*

INTO THE RUINS (FGU); $6.00. Designed by Bob Charrette and Paul Hume. Supplement to *Aftermath*. 28-page book and pull-out 11" x 17" backprinted map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

INTO THE RUINS is FGU's first scenario pack for its after-the-holocaust role-playing game, *Aftermath*. According to the cover, the scenario concerns adventures in the city of Littleton, one of three such communities vying for supremacy among the scavengers, riff-raff and mutant survivors of a nuclear-biological war. The players, incidentally, may have ample opportunity to interact with said scavengers, etc., as well – hopefully without overly serious consequences. The pack is complete with pregenerated NPCs representing the leaders and security forces of the farming community, maps of the city and various structures and descriptions of what may be found within them, along with stats for NPC opponents: the Zombos, the Armored Jeep Gang and the Bridge Trolls.

INTO THE RUINS is quite complete. It should prove a boon for referees who were more than a little overwhelmed by the quantity of rules in the parent game, allowing them more time to absorb those and still have a playable scenario or specific game world, devised, ITR should easily fit in with only minor changes. In fact, the pack is so nicely structured overall that it wouldn't take much to use the basic situation, changing specific stats of NPCs, etc., to fit it into another game system entirely. Several of the situations would prove quite challenging to a *Morrow Project* recon team, for instance.

Most of the problems with INTO THE RUINS are minor: typos, a couple missing values – nothing really serious. The choice of dark gray for the inner city on the main map was unfortunate; it tends to blob up black in places, obscuring names and roads. And the roads and pavement seem to have been left off the area map of the warehouse the adventurers may have to reconnoiter. Some sticklers for extreme realism may object to the Zombos, but actually they're more realistic than many mutants in other such games. The only real lack here is information on the other two communities in the city – the academic community and the eastern coalition – which could cause the GM some effort to create if the players decide to visit either of these (and hair-pulling if FGU later releases a pack on them).

Overall, INTO THE RUINS is well-done and should add greatly to any *Aftermath* campaign.

*– William A. Barton*

OPERATION: RAPIDSTRIKE! (TSR); $5.50. Designed by Mike Carr and Corey Koebernick. Module for *Top Secret*. Mapsheet, 32-page booklet, and reference sheet. Published 1980.

OPERATION: RAPIDSTRIKE! is the second module written for TSR's espionage role-playing game, *Top Secret*, the first being *Sprechenhaltestelle*, which was included in the ruleset. In OPERATION: RAPIDSTRIKE!, six agents infiltrate the island fortress of the villainess, Mademoiselle Larreau. Larreau plans to flood the world's drug market with the deadly hallucinogenic Zucor, using it to further her plans of world domination. The players' mission: destroy the stockpile of Zucor on the island, capture or kill Mme. Larreau, and rescue the professor she kidnapped to help her produce the drug.

This is pure James Bond stuff, and if you like *Top Secret*, you will want this module. It is chock-full of useful ideas for the referee and is a fine example of a well-made adventure for the

game. A good referee can make this module really exciting, especially if he introduces a time-limit for the completion of the mission. The organization, clarity, and presentation are all up to the usual high TSR standards.

Unfortunately, the module is not particularly flexible, as *Sprechenhaltestelle* certainly was. This is a one-shot, one mission adventure that does not lend itself well to expansion. Play will also eventually evolve into one continuous armed conflict as the alarm sounds and guards pour forth to do battle. The referee should know *Top Secret's* involved combat system very well, to run the module effectively.

OPERATION: RAPIDSTRIKE! is highly recommended to all administrators. It is an exciting and worthwhile adventure. Hopefully, TSR will produce many more of these non-D&D modules.

*– Matt Lussenhop*

SORAG (Paranoia Press); $3.50. Designed by Chuck Kallenbach II. Approved for use with *Traveller.* One 5½" x 8¼" 26-page booklet. Published 1981.

Issue one of *High Passage* gave the Imperium a secret service, the Ministry of Justice Special Branch. Now Paranoia has supplied the JSB's Zhodani counterpart, SORAG, the Scientific, Operations, Research and Administration Group – the intelligence and counter-intelligence agency of the Zhodani Consulate. SORAG contains complete character generation tables for creating characters of the four branches of the secret service, security clearance codes, new skills for SORAG agents and new weapons and equipment, including a list of new drugs available to SORAG operatives and to anyone who can find them. Several new vehicles are presented for intelligence work, such as a miniature submarine, intruder shuttle, infiltrator aircraft and autogyro. A wide range of skills may be learned by SORAG personnel, from combat skills – such as the use of special weapons, including the garrote, throwing knives and grenade pistols – to such diverse skills as investigation, psychological warfare, escape and evasion, poison and antidotes, disguise, counterfeiting, and even torture (shudder).

There are several interesting new ideas in SORAG. For one, on the assignment table, a character has to have a certain level security clearance – from A, sensitive, to E, top secret – in order to accept the assignment rolled up. If the assignment requires a higher clearance than the character has at that time, he must serve an alternate assignment instead. All special assignments are worked right into the specific assignment table, doing away with the necessity for a general assignment table altogether. Characters have a chance each assignment to raise their security clearance, allowing them to accept more exciting (and dangerous) assignments.

Aside from a couple of minor typos, there are few problems evident in SORAG. Some might easily complain that the roll needed to advance in security clearance is too high, causing agents to spend a lot of time in dull alternate assignments (clerical, recruiting), but then, that situation probably reflects the realism of a secret service. Another possible problem is that it is sometimes difficult to obtain the 2+ levels of the skills needed for +DMs on the assignment resolution table (especially weapon skills for survival purposes).

Unless the idea of Zhodani intelligence agents waiting around every corner for your hapless characters turns you off, you should find SORAG an intriguing addition to the *Traveller* mythos.

*–William A. Barton*

THIEVES' GUILD II (Gamelords Ltd.); $5.95. Written by Richard Meyer, 60-page 8½" x 11" rulebook. Published 1981.

THIEVES' GUILD II is the second in a series of three booklets of FRP rules and scenarios for thieves. It includes combat rule additions for the TG system, several interesting and (mostly) believable tomb-robbing adventure scenarios, and highwaymen adventures. This volume looks professionally typeset and printed, unlike TG I. As in the first book, the art is OK but not of a full-time professional standard.

TG II does not stand alone if you want to use the intended game system. For that you need TG I (sufficient but incomplete) or the full *Fantasy System* scheduled for publication this summer. TG II scenarios can be used for other FRP games, however. The tombs are heavily trapped; they tend to be all-or-nothing, especially if the thieves are lucky enough to find and use the device which disarms all the traps. The rewards, too, tend to be excessive from the point of view of other games. (Six and a half *million* gold pieces in one dragon's hoard? Then again, the dragon has over 600 hit points, and the players are not supposed to have any way to defeat him). Maps of the tombs are included. The remainder of the booklet is a description of highway travellers, as in TG I.

At this price I suggest you look at a copy before you decide whether to buy it. It is a useful addition to TG, but certainly not indispensable.

*– Lewis Pulsipher*


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WEAPONS (Turtle Press, 11834 Caradonna, Warren, MI 48039); $4.00. Written by Matthew Balent. 5½" x 8½" 30-page booklet. Published 1981.

WEAPONS is "an illustrated compendium of arms suitable for use in medieval fantasy role-playing games," which means virtually every edged or impact melee weapon used in any medieval or primitive culture. Each of the approximately 600 entries includes a small illustration, and shows size as well as shape, weapon type, length, mass, types of attacks, and relative speed, damage, parry capability, and efficiency as a throwing weapon. The relative values are indicated by numbers from 0 to 4.

The drawings are occasionally shaky; the weapons begin to look the same after a while. The bibliography includes 17 books, but one may question some research decisions: why give a bastard sword and broadsword identical values except for length and mass, while the Scottish claymore and German zwei (two) hander have quite different values although both are essentially the same weapon? Is it likely that a zweihander weighs nearly twice as much as a 5½ meter pike? However, let the experts quibble over such details. What is more important is what's missing. There is too little information about too many weapons, leaving out such important details as how much room is required to use a weapon, whether one or two hands are required, and whether the weapon requires an unusual combat style. Can just any fighter, say one wearing plate, use a Japanese katana effectively? I'm not sure, but you won't find the answer here. To adapt any of these weapons to any game you will have to look them up in a weapons reference work to try to find these indispensable details. Thanks to an index, WEAPONS is a quick-reference work, but even in that role there are limitations. A question which plagues D&D-ers is "what is a morningstar?" It's not listed in the index! The index only lists weapon type, not page number – you must still search for the relevant section, and sections aren't in alphabetical order.

In my view there is no need to add weapons to those already in most FRPG; but if you must, you'll need to look them up in a good source to get some detail. Ten times as much information about a tenth as many weapons, presented more professionally, would have been much more useful. In short, WEAPONS is virtually useless.

*– Lewis Pulsipher*

## PLAY AIDS

FIFTY STARBASES (Judges Guild); $5.98. No designer listed. Approved for *Traveller*. 8½" x 11" 94-page book. Published 1981.

If you've ever wondered, while embroiled in a far-flung *Traveller* campaign somewhere in the Imperium or beyond, just what type of facilities were offered at the starport on the next planet, Judges Guild has the book for you. FIFTY STARBASES provides charts, tables and descriptions enough to flesh out even the sketchiest of landing spots on the remotest – or most advanced – worlds in your *Traveller* universe. Fifteen pages of data outline the different services, equipment and personnel likely to be found at various types of starports. This includes new information on survey beacons, berthing fees, refueling methods, available planetary transportation, cargo handling, orbital facilities, and starport working craft – shuttles, tugs, rescue tugs and rescue missiles. There are also starport generation tables, cargo tables and lists of technical degrees and certificates for starport personnel. The remaining 79 pages consist of mapped starports, laid out on the small-hex-within-a-large-hex grid style of the Guild's fantasy mapping systems, with pages for keyed information on facilities.

FIFTY STARBASES will aid *Traveller* referees in making their starports seem more like real places for adventure rather than merely starting and departure points for scenarios. The generation tables, if used with the recommended judgment and discretion, should prove quite handy, especially when the referee is called upon to create on the spot with little or no preparation.

The real failing in FIFTY STARBASES, though, is in the pre-mapped starports. While some of them are well-conceived and seem just ready for an imaginative ref to key in what each structure represents, most of them consist of a lot of cryptic geometric shapes with unknown "textures" that I defy anyone to match up with any terrain key. The book could have easily been cut in half and no one would miss these extra "starports." It seems not as much care was put into this book as with, say, the recent *Glimmerdrift Reaches*. Rather than typeset copy, the text here is obviously shot from a typewritten manuscript, giving it a sloppy, ragged-edge look.

I'm afraid I must give FIFTY STARBASES a qualified recommendation. The information section on starports is quite useful, as will be some of the maps, if you don't mind paying six bucks for the package and being able to use less than half the book, pick up a copy.

*– William A. Barton*

NAVIGATOR'S STARCHARTS (Judges Guild); $4.98. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" 112-page book. Published 1981.

If you're a *Traveller* referee whose favorite part of the game is mapping out new star sectors for your players to explore, yet you don't have easy access to a copy machine, Judges Guild's new approved-for-*Traveller* play aid, NAVIGATOR'S STARCHARTS, should prove quite a useful addition to your game supplies. STARCHARTS contains enough blank maps to record six complete sectors of 16 subsectors each, enough to keep a *Traveller* group busy for some time. In addition to the subsector maps, six sector maps initiate each 16-subsector section to enable one to see at a glance the relationship of each subsector to its neighbors. The sector maps are backed with symbols for amber and red zones, gas giants, starports, naval and scout bases, asteroids and the presence or lack of water. STARCHARTS uses the same format as JG's *Ley* and *Glimmerdrift Reaches* sector guidebooks, maps on the right side, room for planetary data on the left. A sample from *Glimmerdrift* is included on the back cover to aid those unfamiliar with the mapping system.

NAVIGATOR'S STARCHARTS will be appreciated by any referee who has had to leaf through sheets of loose maps to find any particular subsector in his game or who finds the necessity to photocopy maps from other Guild and GDW *Traveller* supplements too inconvenient or costly. The small sector maps are especially nice, eliminating the need to draw up your own on hexpaper and making travel between subsectors easier to manage.

The book would be more useful – and far easier to use – if each page were individually numbered, however. Judges Guild's star symbols are a bit of a pain to try to draw; I recommend using GDW's simpler circles over JG's six-pointed stars. Another annoyance is that the print is so close to the margins, some of it is cut off in the center of the book. The pages themselves are printed in a blue ink that some copiers don't pick up well – if at all.

Still, NAVIGATOR'S STARCHARTS will save you considerable time and expense (unless you have a source of cheap photocopies) in your excursions into stellar cartography.

*– William A. Barton*

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STARSHIPS (Superior Models); $3.50. Written by J.A. Jamieson and W.C. Smith. 8½" x 11" 16-page booklet, hole-punched. Published 1980.

If you're a devotee of Superior Models' *Starfleet Wars* miniature rules and corresponding starship miniatures, you may be aware of STARSHIPS, an "Observer's Directory & Identification Manual." STARSHIPS is an identification manual of some of the newer Superior starship miniatures, though more than a third of its pages are actually devoted to the races that man the ships in Superior's universe. The only ships covered, however, prove to be the new, expensive, not-so-miniature Super Galactic Dreadnoughts and their attendant fighter craft. A chart on the back page does give some new technical information on other new ships, along with a largely unexplained firing table and a note that "possession of this manual gives the player . . . the right to add 5% to all . . . die rolls."

Though it is far too limited in scope, the idea behind STARSHIPS is sound; it *is* somewhat of a pain to try to keep track of all those starships and to whom they belong – especially the fighters, which often come unidentified in small plastic bags. The Super Galactic Dreadnoughts (what a name!), however, seem the least in need of ID aids of any of the Superior ships. The added information on the races of *Starfleet Wars* is a welcome addition, and the illustrations accompanying each description of an individual fleet commander or personality is helpful in visualizing "the enemy" in fleet actions (provided one cares about such niceties).

However, unless you're a real *Starfleet Wars* fanatic, STARSHIPS will likely prove to be of such limited scope as to be of little value. The ship designs pictured show a lack of imagination in several instances: the Carnivore Polecat class looks suspiciously like a certain battlestar in search of a bright and shining planet of a couple of TV seasons ago. The Terran Victory class resembles Darth Vader's star destroyer with its wings clipped. The Terran Meteor attack craft are X-wings, complete with R-2 units nestled behind the cockpits! And I can just see the arguments that "add 5%" rule is going to cause with those who don't have the manual.

If you're really into the *Starfleet Wars* universe, you might find this manual a worthwhile buy for $3.50. Casual players – and those wishing to avoid arguments – might as well pass.

*– William A. Barton*

T&T SURVIVAL KIT (FBI); $10.00. Play aid for T&T. One plastic 3-ring notebook with two reference sheets. Published 1981.

This notebook has a crease down the back. It folds out to double as a GM screen. The contrivance is sturdy and useful. There is room in this notebook to keep a hefty dungeon.

However, T&T is about the *last* FRPG to really need a product like this! The game is so simple that FBI had to duplicate some material to fill up even two reference sheets.

A high quality product, though. I predict it will see use in a lot of games, besides the one for which it was intended.

*– Forrest Johnson*

## MINIATURES

ZHODANI (Martian Metals); $2.95. Approved for *Traveller*. 12 15mm miniature figures in bubble pack. Released 1981.

Martian Metals has at last released a pack of ZHODANI for its line of *Traveller* 15mm miniatures. As the Zhodani are the main enemies of the Imperium in GDW's *Traveller* universe, one would have thought a pack of such figures would have been one of the initial releases. The problem was obviously distinguishing the Zhodani from other human figures. The answer, unfortunately, seems to have eluded Martian Metals. The set is disappointing. Of the 12 figures, only six are actual Zhodani; the rest are robots: three warbots and three quite clearly intended to be R-2 units! (Look out Imperium – the Zhodani apparently have allied themselves with the Rebels! May the Farce – er, sorry, J.D. – Force be with them.)

The six Zhodani appear to be officers; they carry only handguns and seem to be in some sort of uniform. There are only two different poses, neither of which are suitable for combat. And the facial features are almost nonexistent – mere holes for eyes and mouth, the worst on any of the MM *Traveller* figures yet. If mixed with other figures from the *Mercenary* and *Marines* pack, these figures would be usable as officers in a Zhodani force. But so would many of the *Adventurer* figures. The Warbots are nicely fierce-looking and different enough from the warbots in the *Robots* pack to use in a Zhodani-Imperium mechanized clash. And if you wanted R-2 units, well, now you've got 'em (and I suppose if there's a *Droyne* pack in the works, Yoda will be included somehow – right size, you know).

Ah well. If you're collecting the MM *Traveller* miniatures, add a set of ZHODANI to your collection – after all, it's only three bucks. But I certainly could have hoped for more than this. And I certainly will *expect* more from future sets, hopefully with Aslan and other *Traveller* aliens. You should, too. Let's hope we're not disappointed too many more times. Okay, MM?

*– William A. Barton*

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attack. . . main drive is gone. .
turret number one not responding . . .
Mayday. . . losing cabin pressure
fast. . . calling anyone. . . please help. . .
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## COMPUTER GAMES

ABM (Muse Software); $29.95. Disk for 32K Apple. One player; playing time 30 minutes. Published 1981.

ABM is an Apple version of the popular arcade game *Missile Command*. The player is defending six East Coast cities against an endless onslaught of nuclear ICBMs (some of them MIRVs), using anti-ballistic missiles launched from five silos stationed in between the cities. The ABMs are aimed using a crosshair controlled by the paddles/joystick and are fired using the paddle buttons. Two of the bases fire a more powerful ABM, and all of the bases have the capability to recover from nuclear blasts. Once the game is started, it continues until all six cities have been completely destroyed.

I have to give this game good ratings on a number of points. The graphics and sound are very well done – it's not easy to simultaneously update the traces of a dozen missiles while producing shapes and sounds for a few explosions. The game is very playable and very addictive. In short, it's a nicely done piece of software.

This game, however, cannot compete with the actual arcade version. It lacks both the speed (it isn't slow; it's just not fast) and the little extras that keep people dropping quarters into *Missile Command*. Also, my review copy managed to destroy itself while a friend was booting it up, a disturbing event, to say the least.

In the end, the question is whether or not you want to spend the money for another arcade game. If so, then I can recommend ABM to you with the above caveats.

*– Bruce F. Webster*

GALACTIC ATTACK (Siro-Tech Software); $29.95. Disk for 48K Apple with DOS 3.3 or Language Card. One player; playing time 30 minutes to several hours. Published 1981.

GALACTIC ATTACK is a real-time space-war simulation with strong Trek overtones (phasers, torpedoes, shields, energy levels – even the ships look strangely familiar), but the game plays far differently from any Trek game I've ever seen. The main objective is to recapture the planets in the solar system occupied by Kzinti armies (initially all but Earth/Luna) while defending yourself against Kzinti ships. Capturing a planet requires ship-to-ground bombardment (they fire back, too), followed by beaming down troops carried from planets you control. Ship-to-ship combat involves laying down lines of torpedoes, dodging the ones coming at you, maneuvering for position and just generally trying to blow the Kzinti out of the sky before they do the same to you.

I have very high praise for GALACTIC ATTACK. The graphics are superb, considering the real-time environment and all the things the program has to do. The Kzinti ships are tough and smart – not like the Klingon wimps found in most *Star Trek* games – and, wonder of wonders, you really *do* have to use tactics to survive each encounter: if you just stand still and slug it out, you will usually be blown away. The need to capture planets is a nice twist, and it takes a while to learn just how to best do it. A nice feature for the real-time environment is the use of the letters QWE/ASD/ZXC as a directional keypad for quick angle entry (though you can also use numbers, if you wish). And one other thing: you don't go looking for Kzinti ships . . . they come looking for *you*.

As good as GALACTIC ATTACK is, it has one major flaw and several minor ones. The major one is that a game in progress can't be saved (though you can put it in "stasis" to take care of emergency matters). This flaw is inexcusable in any game requiring more than an hour to play, and doubly so in this case because GA was written in Pascal, which has very powerful disk I/O capabilities. The two most annoying minor ones are the lack of audio feedback (i.e., a beep) when erroneous input is received and the inequities of the scoring algorithm that assigns your point total at game's end. Also, be warned that your typing skills will be sorely tested – it can be fatal to take your eyes off the screen for even a few seconds, and if you're a slow typist, you may find yourself turned into an expanding ball of gas before you get off more than a few shots.

Despite the above, I recommend GALACTIC ATTACK with few reservations. It gives you far more for your money than a lot of other games costing the same. Because the difficulty level can be adjusted to a very high point, it will be a long time before you master this game.

*– Bruce F. Webster*


# UNIVERSE III

UNIVERSE III is a computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe to explore, colonize, and conquer new worlds, contending with other players and unknown hazards. Each time you send in a turn, the computer will evaluate it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and send you a printout showing your current status. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages . . . to trade, negotiate, or intimidate.

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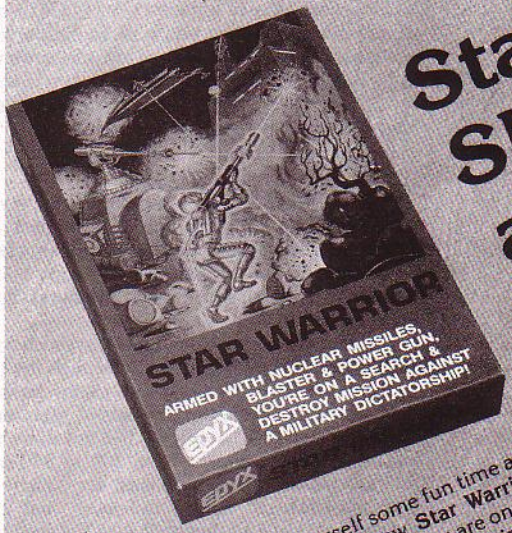
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COMPUTER GAMES THINKERS PLAY EPYX

GALAXY WARS (Broderbund Software, Box 3266, Eugene OR 97403); $24.95. 32K disk by Starcraft for the Apple. One player. Published 1980.

This one should have been named *Fish in Space*. In order to win you must pilot a missile through an obstacle course of fish(!) and knock out alien saucers. GALAXY WARS is a Japanese import marketed by Broderbund Software, and it's quite a decent little arcade game. Only I found myself waiting for Mothra or Godzilla to rear up out of the schools of fish and take a swipe at my missile.

There are a few other disconcerting things about GALAXY WARS, although none of them really detract from the program. For one, you have to turn your monitor on its side unless you prefer to visualize your missile as a bazooka shell. And then there are the choreographed little saucers all synchronized with the opening sound routine, calling to mind the June Taylor Dancers or a Busby Berkley musical.

Perhaps these are not logical inconsistencies at all, but quite natural to the Oriental mind . . . if we Westerners buy the line about the moon being made of green cheese, why not swarms of fish roaming the astral pathways? And GALAXY *is* fun to play, as much fun as any *Invaders*-type game I have seen. Now if we can just get the "lethal writhing electrical worms" from *Space Invasion* onto hooks . . .

*– Dave Albert*

*(Reprint courtesy of SoftSide magazine.)*

LORDS OF KARMA (Avalon Hill); $20.00. Tape for the 48K TRS-80, and 32K Apple and Pet. One player; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

This adventure is for the do-gooders of the world, the paladins, the embodiments of the chivalric code. The whole point of the adventure is to do good deeds. By so doing, you ensure yourself of a place in heaven, via the AH Express. The way that all this is carried out is in the scoring system – the more good that you do, the more "karma points" you accumulate – an ironic "westernization" of the concept of karma. There are all sorts of ways to get karma points – you can slay monsters, rescue the princess, donate to the charity of your choice . . . I wouldn't be surprised if there was even a little old lady to escort across a busy street. If you prefer activities of the evil persuasion, then be prepared to evaluate your performance on a negative scale, for you will get -X karma points if you're nasty.

Winning the game is quite simple: When you reach a certain total of karma points (over 200) you will be elevated to heaven upon performance of certain acts. Should you get killed in your wanderings, don't despair: you will be promptly resurrected on a mountain top, (empty-handed, of course). But the karma points accumulated in your previous incarnations will still be there. Should your karma point total be in the negative range, be prepared to burn in purgatory prior to rebirth. If anything, this might be the principal failing of LORDS OF KARMA: You are always reborn. Thus, if you have the patience to keep plugging away, you can win in a single sitting. There is really no challenge to winning, then . . . just patience.

There are no major differences between this adventure and the vast majority of other "adventure-types" as far as execution is concerned. Simple two word commands are entered for actions. One drawback is that upon arriving at a new location you must specify an examination, otherwise you get only the most cursory description of the scene and no mention of possible exits.

All in all, LORDS OF KARMA is a good adventure. There are plenty of locations and a fairly wide variety of situations to face. The program is done in machine language and executes quickly. It is well written and thematically consistent, and requires no esoteric knowledge on the part of the user. If you like this type of computer game, then I would recommend LORDS OF KARMA. It is really quite enjoyable. However, if you are expecting more than a simple adventure, then you may be disappointed. Avalon Hill has not broken any new ground; they have only covered known territory well.

*– Dave Albert*

*(Reprint courtesy of SoftSide magazine.)*

SKIING (Activision, 759 E. Evelyn Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086); $19.95. Designed by Bob Whitehead. Video cartridge for the Atari. Includes one cartridge and an instruction booklet. One player; playing time 1-3 minutes. Published 1980.

SKIING is a video game using a joystick controller to guide the skier figure through the ten courses provided. The first five games are slalom runs with increasing numbers of gates and/or faster speeds. The second five are downhill runs of distances ranging from 200 to 900 meters and gaining speed with each step. Eight of the scenarios are always the same, but the toughest slalom and downhill runs are randomly set each time selected.

SKIING is a mechanically simple game with eight skier positions and three types of terrain: trees, moguls, and gate flags. The only options available to the player are turning the skier and jumping over moguls. But for all its simplicity, it is an involving, fascinating game. With trees zooming by, the game gives the feel of skiing, and where else can you hit trees for the sixth time without breaking a leg?

It is only a one-player game, so competitions have to be a matter of noting times and taking turns, which at first seems like a bother.

SKIING is a simple game with excellent graphics and varying scenarios. It's a must for those with the Atari system.

*– Richard A. Edwards*

## HISTORICAL GAMES

ALARIC THE GOTH (Strategic Studies Games); $10.00. Designed by Paul L. Van Patten, Jr. One 7-page rulebook, a 22" x 25" three color map, and 480 counters. Two to six players; playing time two to four or more hours. Published 1980.

ALARIC is a strategic level simulation of the end of the Roman Empire and its fall to the barbarians. One player takes the Roman side – taxing provinces, raising different troop and ship types, and trying to keep the empire together as best he can. The other one to five players control different barbarian groups which try to move into imperial territory to set up kingdoms of their own.

ALARIC is very true to its period with a nicely done map of the western half of the Roman Empire including Africa, colorful counters, and no charts. Simple *Risk*-like rules and similarly easy movement rules make the rules easy to understand and use. Designer's notes show a commitment to historical accuracy in general and the player's notes give good hints on strategy.

The only debatable point is the play balance, which heavily favors the barbarians as a whole. The only way Rome can stand is to divide the invaders against themselves, something which the game supplies few mechanics for.

ALARIC THE GOTH is fair history, a good game, and great fun.

*– Richard A. Edwards*


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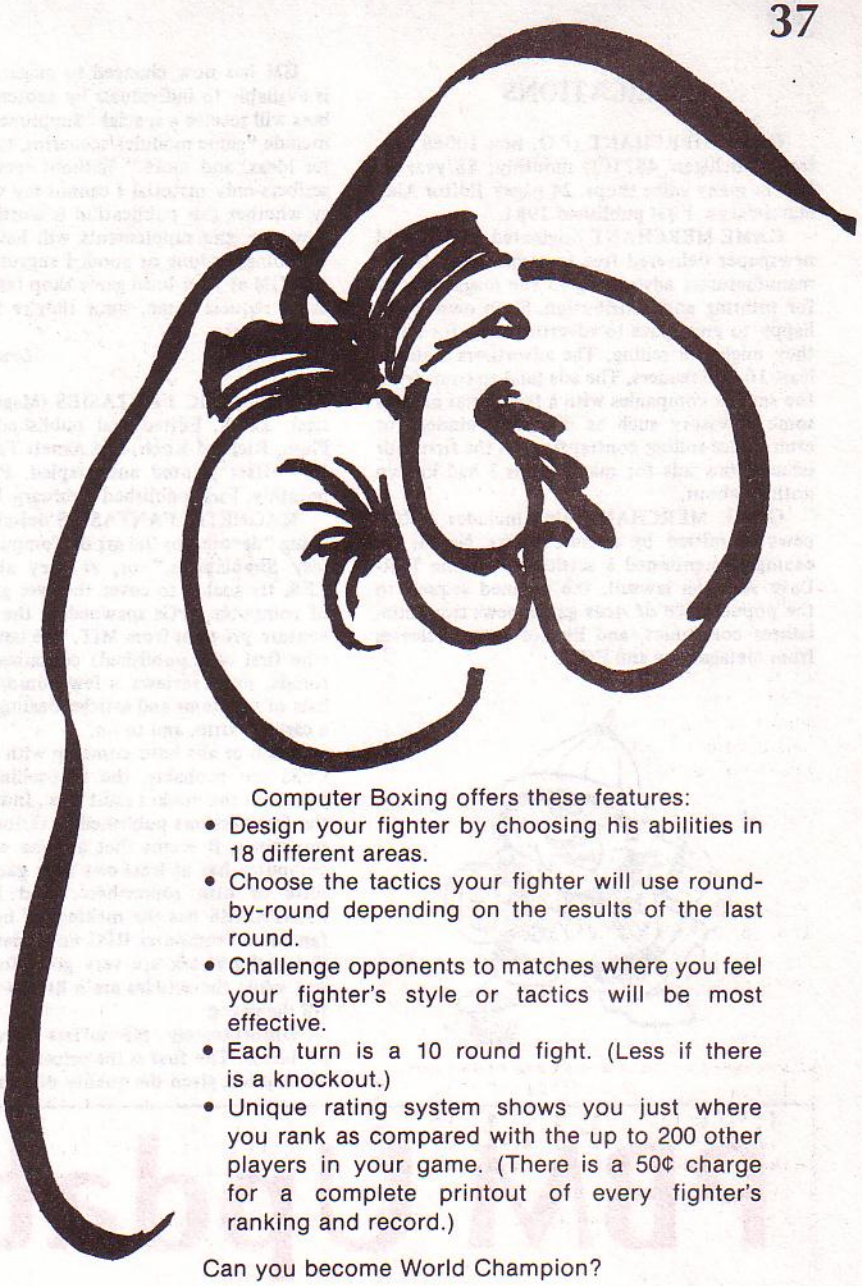
# COMPUTER BOXING



Tonight the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, California is the scene for what will be an interesting fight between Smith and Thompson.

Smith has good control over his fights and usually strikes first. He has a big punch and can knock out his opponent. Smith has been known to go down when hit with a good punch. Smith has also been known to cut. He tends to tire in the later rounds and is easy to hit. Smith's record is 8 wins, 1 loss, 1 draw with 4 knockouts.

Thompson is a good counterpuncher, but he does not have a knockout punch. He has a good killer instinct and will attack his opponent if he looks hurt. Thompson has great endurance and defensive skills making him hard to hit. Thompson's record is 6 wins, 2 losses, no draws and no knockouts.

Smith is the favorite to win this bout.

The fight is about to begin . . .

Computer Boxing simulates professional boxing through a correspondence game. It allows for interaction between players through a continuous game that may be entered at any time. In creating this computer simulation, I have tried to bring together all the subtle factors involved in the sport of professional boxing. Through the use of a computer, we are able to interrelate many subtle effects of skill, condition, tactics and fighter initiative to determine the outcome blow-by-blow and round-by-round. The actual rules are brief because the computer will handle all the details once the data is available. The objective of the game is to win each boxing match and as a result rise in the ranking to finally become world champion.

Computer Boxing offers these features:

- Design your fighter by choosing his abilities in 18 different areas.
- Choose the tactics your fighter will use round-by-round depending on the results of the last round.
- Challenge opponents to matches where you feel your fighter's style or tactics will be most effective.
- Each turn is a 10 round fight. (Less if there is a knockout.)
- Unique rating system shows you just where you rank as compared with the up to 200 other players in your game. (There is a 50¢ charge for a complete printout of every fighter's ranking and record.)

Can you become World Champion?

**Computer Boxing** may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first three turns, setup, rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased separately for $3.50.

Send to: **Schubel & Son**
P.O. Box 214848
Sacramento, CA 95821

Enter me in Computer Boxing

**Name** _____

**Address** _____

**City** _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

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## PUBLICATIONS

GAME MERCHANT (P.O. Box 10068, Detroit, Michigan 48210), monthly, $8/year or free in many game shops. 24 pages. Editor Alex Marciniszyn. First published 1981.

GAME MERCHANT originated as a tabloid newspaper delivered free to game shops. Game manufacturers advertising in the magazine pay for printing and distribution. Shop owners are happy to give space to advertisements for items they might be selling. The advertisers reach at least 10,000 readers. The ads tend to come from the smaller companies with a few games or with some accessory such as dice, ring binders, or even a dice-rolling contraption. In the first four issues I saw ads for many items I had known nothing about.

GAME MERCHANT also includes hobby news submitted by manufacturers. No. 3, for example, mentioned a settlement of the TSR-Dave Arneson lawsuit, the planned sequels to the popular *Ace of Aces* game, news from miniatures companies, and lists of future releases from Metagaming and FGU.

GM has now changed to magazine size and is available to individuals by subscription. Subbers will receive a special "Suppliment" [sic] to include "game modules/scenarios, maps, character ideas, and more." Without seeing the subscribers-only material I cannot say with certainty whether this publication is worth $8 a year. However, the supplements will have to be extraordinarily long or good. I suggest you try to find GM at your local game shop (ask your dealer to request some, since they're free) if you want a look.

*– Lewis Pulsipher*

MAGNETIC FANTASIES (Magnetic Fantasies); $2.95. Edited and published by Claude Plum, Richard Koch, and Arnett Taylor. 8½" x 11" offset printed and stapled. Published bimonthly. First published February 1981.

MAGNETIC FANTASIES describes itself as being "devoted to the art of Computerized Fantasy Simulations," or, as they abbreviate it, CFS. Its goal is to cover the ever growing field of computer RPGs spawned by the original Adventure program from MIT. The issue I received (the first ever published) contained a few editorials, some reviews, a few humorous articles, lists of programs and articles dealing with CFSs, a cartoon strip, and so on.

Plum et alis have come up with a good idea. CFSs are probably the best-selling computer games on the market right now. Indeed, with all the free versions published in various computer magazines, it seems that anyone with a home computer has at least *one* such game on a cassette or disk somewhere. And MAGNETIC FANTASIES has the makings of becoming the fanzine of computer RPG enthusiasts. The layout and artwork are very good for a fanzine, and while the articles are a little weak, they do fill the pages.

Unfortunately, MF suffers from two major problems. The first is the price: $2.95 is a ridiculous price, given the quality of this publication and the articles therein. The second is that the editors have a case of the "terminal cutesies" (terminal meaning "fatal," not "relating to CRTs"), including such things as parenthetical comments in old English type and heavy-handed wisecracking that gets tiring after about the third paragraph.

Recommendation: look before you buy, and buy only if there is some information in there worth the cost of the magazine. I realize they're just starting . . . but I don't remember the early *Space Gamers* being this bad.

*– Bruce F. Webster*

WYRMS FOOTNOTES (Chaosium); $2.25 per issue or $8/year (4 issues). Edited by Charlie Frank. 8½" x 11", 32-pages.

The old *Wyrm's Footnotes* was a Chaosium house organ of amateur quality. Now WYRMS FOOTNOTES is dedicated solely to providing source material for *RuneQuest*. The magazine has both one-shot and continuing articles of "official" RQ material available nowhere else.

This is Valhalla for the Glorantha gamemaster. Regular features cover *RuneQuest* variants and clarifications, Gloranthan history, geography and theology, and new monsters and magic gizmos.

The writing style is dry to the point of resembling a social studies reading assignment. Emphasis should also be shifted from academic to practical: knowing the life stages of Yelm, God of Light, may be enlightening but how does it apply to running him as an NPC on that next adventure? WYRMS FOOTNOTES is also heavily oriented to the gamemaster running a Glorantha campaign (Glorantha is The Chaosium's special fantasy world); three-fourths of this material will be useless to a non-Gloranthan gamemaster.

I found the magazine to be required reading for the Glorantha-oriented RQ gamemaster, but only optional for the non-Glorantha GM.

*– W.G. Armintrout*

# PBM Update

### THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

*Game News.* Three new cities have been built by players within the last six months. Each of these cities is a marvel of architecture. The first of these cities, Ulan-Bator, is located west of Exxcel and was constructed as an administrative headquarters and military installation as well as a cultural center for the Republic of Ulan-Bator. The city was built to include an impressive cultural complex of a university, museum and theater with parks and a beautiful garden terrace with vegetation, fountains and reflecting pools. The second new city, Columbine, lies isolated in the permanent ice. Its walls are massive ice sheets towering 100 feet above the surrounding glacier. It is said to have cost over 129,000 gold to construct this city of ice. The third city is the most mysterious on Crane. The city of Selwood is a small and mysterious barbarian city set in the midst of a dense and nearly impenetrable tropical forest. Built around the ruins of an ancient reptile-worshipping civilization, its inner forbidden city is the palace of the legendary Lizard King. Many legends and rumors abound. One speaks of a gold and jeweled lizard statue, reported to be among the most valuable treasures on all Crane.

### STARMASTER (Schubel & Son)

*Game News.* Several (player controlled, advanced position) Elder Races have become more active. There seems to be a move throughout many areas of the Central Galaxy for these Elder Races to once again establish their spheres of influence. These spheres of influence were greatly eroded by the cataclysmic destruction of the Great Wars between the forces of the Lyrania and those of the Swarm. Among the reemerging Elders are The Gorluk Swarm (a psionic, telepathic race), The Shyrian State Slavocracy (a high technologic, individual society), The Xereronomes Swarm (a psionic, telepathic race), The Lyranian Star Imperium (one of the most advanced and powerful empires in the Central Galaxy), The T'Ching-ka Swarm (a boosted psionic race), The Gigantese Socialist State (a psionic race of cold technology), The Iotian Amoeba (a lower technology, telepathic society), and The Onon-Tau Swarm (a psionic, telepathic race of great physical strength). It is believed that other Elder Races will become more active in the near future.

*– George Schubel*

### UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

*Company News. Universe II* will be closed for vacation between September 15 and October 15. No turns will be processed during that period.

*Game News:*

*Quadrant I.* Both the Regajians and the Ixtli are continuing their buildups. It is rumored that one Etuel star system is in danger of being captured.

*Quadrant II.* A major exploration effort is being made in the Ansellus area. A Terran starship is placing space mine fields in strategic locations to block rapid ship movement between Zosma and Algieba.

*Quadrant III.* The Muar Raiders lost several ships, but are still pushing toward Alkes. Muar successes may be due to a new "cloaking" device.

*Quadrant IV.* A major invasion of the Regajian Empire by Terran starships is in progress. The I.D.C. base is growing rapidly.

*– Jon Clemens*

*PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the March issue is January 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.*

# LETTERS

The prices listed in the *StarMaster* advertisement in the August issue were incorrect. A *StarMaster* setup is $12.00. This includes the setup and your first two turns. Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Patty Schubel
Schubel & Son

I was pleased to read that computerized versions of some of your games may soon be available. However, I have some misgivings about them being developed and marketed by an established game company. I realize that many of the problems involved with producing a computer game are avoided by taking this route, but the tradeoffs could be disastrous.

One of your trademarks has been good, simple products at reasonable prices, a philosophy not shared by most computer gaming companies. Commercial computer games generally fall into the following categories:

Poorly done and inexpensive.
Poorly done and not so inexpensive.
Well done and overpriced.
Well done and reasonably priced.

Only a handful of computer games are in the last category. I hope your games will join them.

A reasonable price for a computer game depends on a number of factors. High replay value, computer opponent options, and multiple scenarios will raise a game's basic value. If I find that the computer implementations do not have the above factors or are overpriced, I would probably buy the $3.00 manual version and write my own program.

I have noticed that most reviews of computer games in TSG are for TRS-80 versions or TRS-80 only games. If you only offer TRS-80 versions of your games, I wouldn't be able to buy them even if they fall into the "well done and reasonably priced" category since I own an Apple II+ with disk drive. Perhaps you could run an article covering your plans on what versions will be offered, the type of graphics that will be used, the manner of play, the scenarios, etc. This would be helpful for readers like myself who don't live in the Austin area.

Dave Allen
Lisle, IL

Today I start my subscription to *The Space Gamer*. I have not been reading your publication long, but in the short time I have realized you have one of the best. I have unfortunately read only four of your magazines. I especially enjoy the personal touch. The articles are interesting to read and don't read as a newspaper obituary. It appears to me you have an excellent staff. My only minor complaint is that the magazine has a little too much fantasy and computer material. I appreciate the honest (and comical) approach used. I do feel the subscription rates are higher than other magazines but you have a higher quality magazine and do suffer double digit inflation as the rest of us. I hope TSG will give me years of enjoyment.

Cameron Bishop
Las Vegas, NV

# NEWS & PLUGS

In competition with companies which have offered "argent reptiles, auric goats, and 24kt plated mages" as promotion prizes, Gamelords has announced a contest for The Terrible Tiny Tarnished Tinplated Turkey. The Turkey will go to the gamer who finds the most puns in the company's new FRP supplement, *The Free City of Haven*. The winner will also get a free trip to a 1982 game convention of his choice and have his name immortalized in a future Gamelords supplement.

Dynacomp has released three new games for the Atari: *Alpha Fighter* ($14.95 cassette/ $18.95 disk), *Intruder Alert* ($16.95 cassette/ $20.95 disk) and *Giant Slalom* ($14.95 cassette/$18.95 disk).

Computer Consultants Iowa (POB 427, Marion, Iowa 52302) offers *Pornopoly*, an X-rated game for 2-4 players. Available on disk for the Apple, TRS-80 and Atari. Price: $29.95.

New from GDW: *Invasion Earth*, a board game based on "the final battle of the Solomani Rim War." Price: $11.98.

SPI is already designing two supplements for its SF RPG, *Universe*. Also planned: an expansion for *DragonQuest*.

Automated Simulations has rereleased *Invasion Orion* with a second program, which allows players to design new scenarios, and to create their own ships. Price: $24.95.

Kask's *Adventure Gaming* magazine (POB 12291, Norwood, Ohio 45212) has made its appearance. It is a 36-page slick monthly devoted to "the entire spectrum of the hobby." 13-issue sub: $29.00. Sample copy: $3.00.

The Game Designer's Guild has announced its 1980 awards: *Ace of Aces* (Nova Games), *TacForce* (GDW), *Empires of the Middle Ages* (SPI), *Streets of Stalingrad* (the late Phoenix Games), and *Azhanti High Lightning* (GDW).

Automated Simulations has converted *Temple of Apshai* for the Atari, 32K. Price: $39.95.

Fidelity Electronics has filed an infringement-of-patent suit against Tryom, Inc. and Applied Concepts. Fidelity has a patent, issued November 25, 1980, on electronic board games such as "games normally played between two competitors wherein the game substitutes for the second competitor."

Reliable rumor: *Richard Berg's Review of Games* will soon be printing its last issue. Though it won a lot of praise, RBROG never managed to get much circulation.

Starting with issue 12, *Different Worlds* will be going monthly.

Dimension Six offers *Concrete Wilderness*, yet another post-holocaust game. The special twist is, you can play yourself as a character.

Rumor: A sequel to *Panzer Pranks* is in development. The tentative title is *Squat Leader*.

FASA has purchased a half interest in *High Passage*, and will be handling business and distribution. The old owners will retain editorial control.

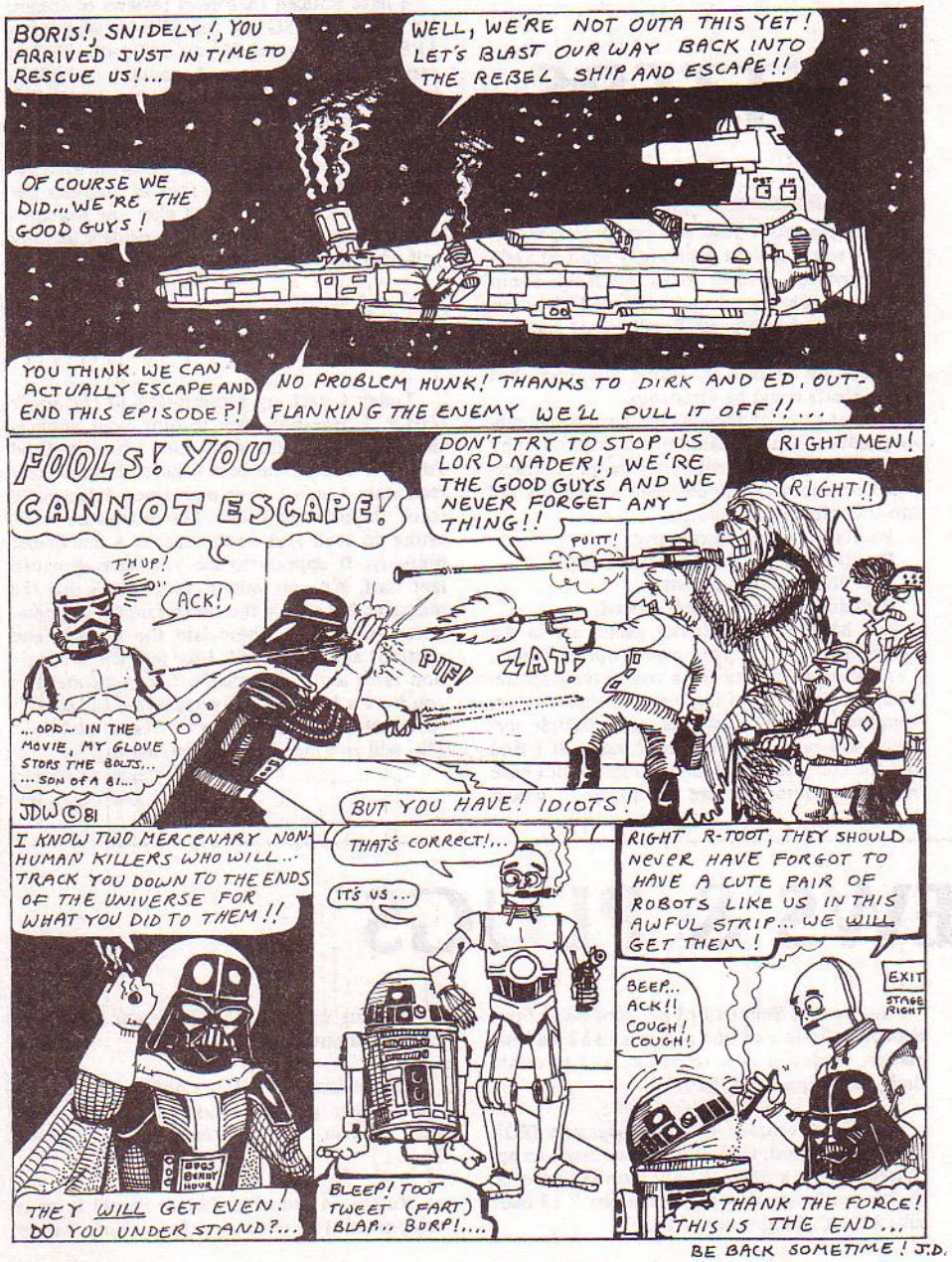
SPI is planning three introductory games for release this fall. One title: *The Creature That Ate New York*.

Future releases from Paranoia Press: *Aliens & Artifacts, Ryker's Catalogue of Arms* and *Scenes and Situations*, all for *Traveller*.

Adventures by Mail (POB 424-D, Cohoes, NY 12047) offers the PBM game *Beyond the Stellar Empire*. $11.00 set-up, including first two turns; subsequent turns $3.50.

Task Force Games has a new address: 1110 N. Fillmore, Amarillo, TX 79107.

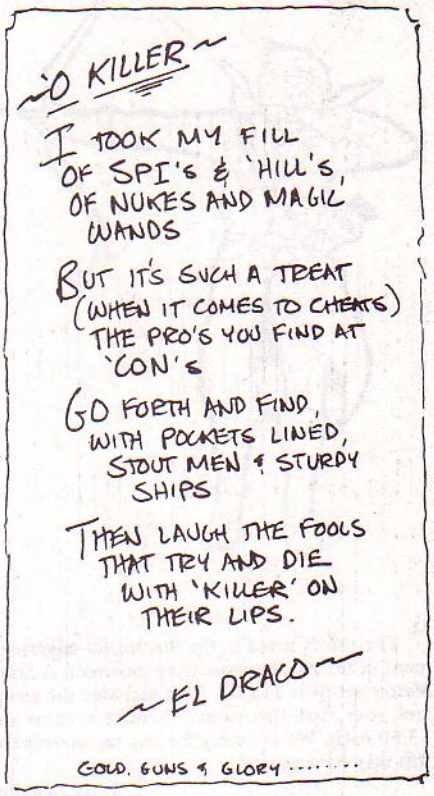
# The Good Guys by JD


BORIS!, SNIDELY!, YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO RESCUE US!...
WELL, WE'RE NOT OUTA THIS YET! LET'S BLAST OUR WAY BACK INTO THE REBEL SHIP AND ESCAPE!!
OF COURSE WE DID... WE'RE THE GOOD GUYS!
YOU THINK WE CAN ACTUALLY ESCAPE AND END THIS EPISODE?!
NO PROBLEM HUNK! THANKS TO DIRK AND ED, OUT-FLANKING THE ENEMY WE'LL PULL IT OFF!!...
FOOLS! YOU CANNOT ESCAPE!
DON'T TRY TO STOP US LORD NADER!, WE'RE THE GOOD GUYS AND WE NEVER FORGET ANY-THING!!
RIGHT MEN!
RIGHT!!
PUITT!
THUP!
ACK!
PIF!
ZAT!
...ODD... IN THE MOVIE, MY GLOVE STOPS THE BOLTS... ...SON OF A BI...
JDW ©81
BUT YOU HAVE! IDIOTS!
I KNOW TWO MERCENARY NON-HUMAN KILLERS WHO WILL... TRACK YOU DOWN TO THE ENDS OF THE UNIVERSE FOR WHAT YOU DID TO THEM!!
THAT'S CORRECT!...
IT'S US...
RIGHT R-TOOT, THEY SHOULD NEVER HAVE FORGOT TO HAVE A CUTE PAIR OF ROBOTS LIKE US IN THIS AWFUL STRIP... WE WILL GET THEM!
BEEP... ACK!! COUGH! COUGH!
EXIT STAGE RIGHT
BOGS BENDY HOUR
THEY WILL GET EVEN! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?...
BLEEP! TOOT TWEET (FART) BLAR.. BURP!....
THANK THE FORCE! THIS IS THE END...

BE BACK SOMETIME! J.D.

*Letters, continued . . .*

*One of the brighter spots of Origins was the "how to cheat" seminar run by El Draco, the creator of Privateer! We gave him a copy of KILLER; his reaction was in verse.*


~O KILLER~
I TOOK MY FILL OF SPI'S & 'HILL'S, OF NUKES AND MAGIC WANDS
BUT IT'S SUCH A TREAT (WHEN IT COMES TO CHEATS) THE PRO'S YOU FIND AT 'CON'S
GO FORTH AND FIND, WITH POCKETS LINED, STOUT MEN & STURDY SHIPS
THEN LAUGH THE FOOLS THAT TRY AND DIE WITH 'KILLER' ON THEIR LIPS.
~EL DRACO~
GOLD, GUNS & GLORY.....

# Calendar

September 3-7: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211 or (303) 433-9774.

September 4-7: GLASC VI. Simulation gaming con, including monster games. Contact GLASC Secretary, c/o L. Daniel, 20550 Wyandotte St., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

September 5-7: GATEWAY 1981. Strategy gaming con, fantasy & SF included. Contact Gateway, c/o Mark Snowden, 1864 Nutwood Pl., Anaheim, CA 92804.

September 11-13: DRAGON FLIGHT. A FRP con, to be held in Seattle. Contact The Brass Dragon Society, P.O. Box 33872, Seattle, WA 98133.

September 11-13: COPPER CON. Wargaming, FRP, video games, etc. Contact Copper Con, P.O. Box 11743, Phoenix, AZ 85061.

September 25-27: BABEL CON '81. Star Trek, F&SF con. Contact Steve Harrison, Babel Con '81, 1355 Cornell SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

September 25-27: GALACTICON 81. SF con. Contact Galacticon 81, P.O. Box 491, Daytona Beach, FL 32015.

September 25-27: URCON III. SF and simulation gaming con. Contact P.O. Box 6647, Rochester, NY 14627.

September 26-27: GAMES DAY '81. Contact (SASE) Games Day '81, Games Workshop Ltd., 17/18 Hythe Road, London NW10.

November 20-22: CONTRADICTION. SF Con. Contact Linda Michaels, 27 Argosy, Amherst, NY 14226.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS – let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

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# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

*Now . . . more games from the designer of OGRE, G.E.V., RAID ON IRAN, and THE FANTASY TRIP! With the quality you expect from far more expensive packages. Our $3.00 games have full-color maps and covers, illustrated rules, and multi-color (or even full-color) counters. Our $5 books are clearly written and authoritative. And Denis Loubet's Cardboard Heroes are beautiful. Read on!*

***GAMES:***

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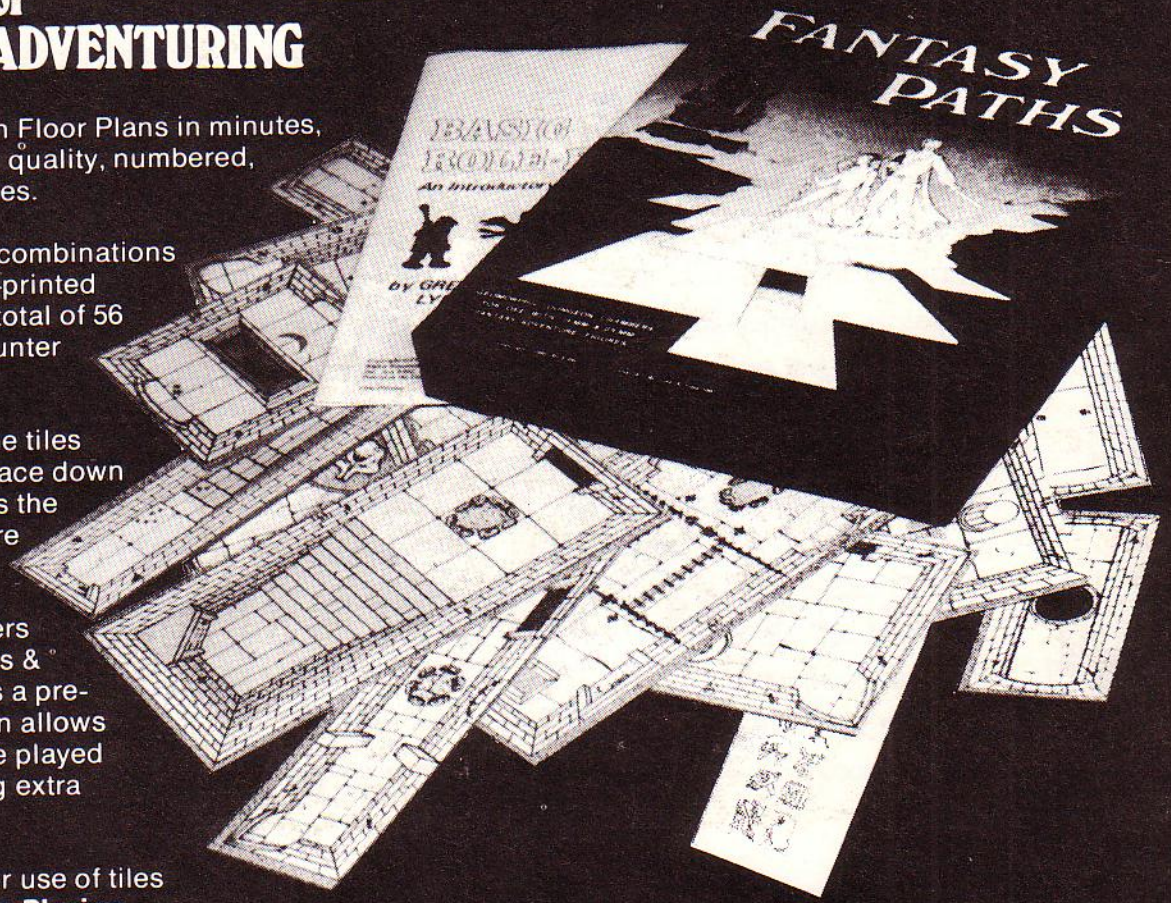


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